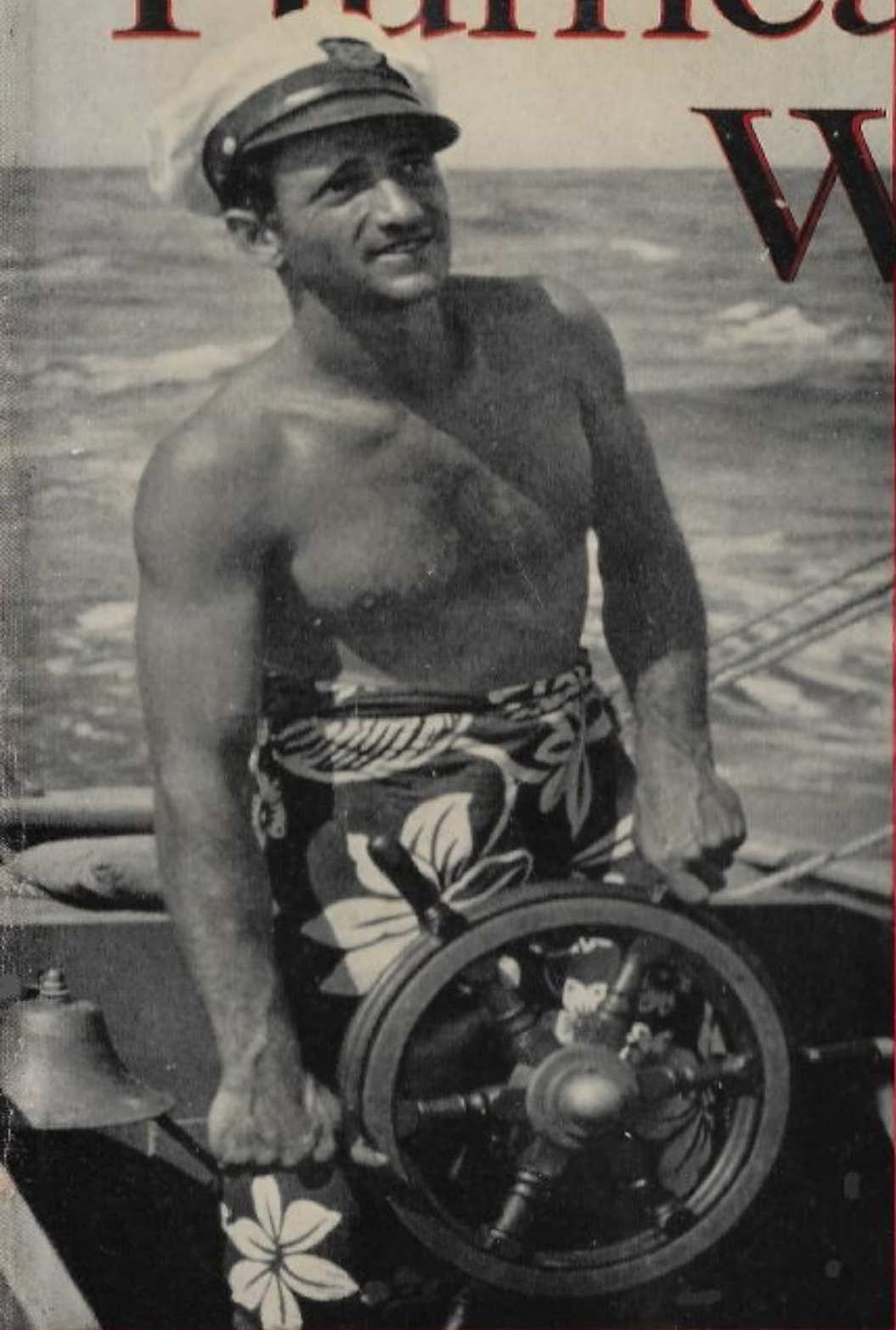


# Hurricane's Wake



Around  
the World  
on a  
Ketch

By Ray Kauffman



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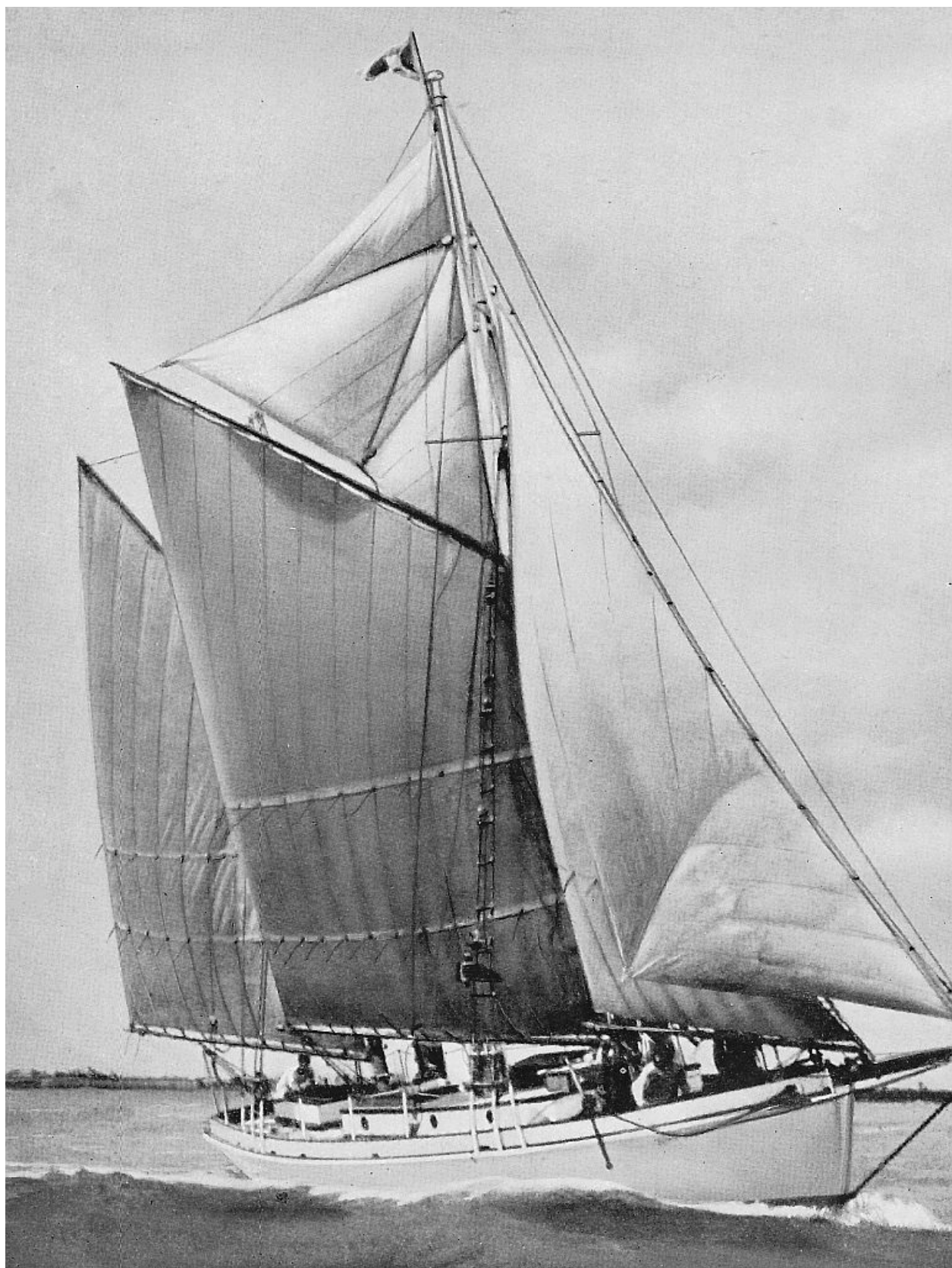
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the World  
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## **HURRICANE'S WAKE**



*The Hurricane reaches out to sea on a voyage around the world.*

# HURRICANE'S WAKE

*AROUND THE WORLD IN A KETCH*

By

**RAY KAUFFMAN**

ILLUSTRATED

*New York*

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## **HURRICANE'S WAKE**

## Chapter I

**SIDOINE KREBS** was an honest man, building ships today as his grandfather had done a hundred years ago, but slowly conforming to the demands of the present-day owners and skippers. I had met Mr. Krebs on a previous trip south, and I had not forgotten him.

After a futile search along the coast from New Orleans to Tampa for a suitable boat, Gerry and I wound up in the little fishing village of Pascagoula, resolved to do business with Mr. Krebs. His shipyard had been idle for over a year, excepting a few orders for “pullin’ skiffs” from the local oystermen, and he was eager for work. Yet it was hard to get Sidoine down to figures in black and white. I talked about a hull contract for two thousand dollars, and Sid said he would build it. That, I thought, was a low price, so I had several sheets of detailed specifications at hand. When I showed them to Sidoine, he looked puzzled and said, “I tol’ you I would build you all a little boat fo’ two thousand, hull and decks, an’ I’ll do her proper, but I don’t see no sense in messin’ with all them papers.”

“But,” I protested, “we intend going a hell of a long way in this ship, and she must be seaworthy. We can’t afford to take a chance unless the hull is built according to these specifications.”

Siodine, his eyes bright with anger, snorted and shook his finger in the general direction of the dilapidated sawmill and a husky seventy-foot fishing smack shored up in the yard.

“I ain’t never turned out no boats that wasn’t seawo’thy. I got thirty-five schooners afishin’ snapper offen Campeche banks, an’ they ain’t a one aleakin’ yet. ... I tell you they ain’t no po’ boats ever a la’nched offen them ways. Specifications!” Splat, and a well-masticated half pint of Beech Nut scrap festooned a cypress log.

“Well,” I began again, “I have some plans here----”

“Mister, them drawin’s is sho’ neat, but I left my glasses up to the house an’ I

cain't read them figures. Why don't you just tell me how long you wants her, an' what beam, an' how much water you aim fo' her to draw, an' I'll make you a model to the half-inch scale."

There was something about Sidoine, I do not know what it was, but I knew we would not go wrong. Taking a long breath and shuffling the papers, I started again.

"Now about this contract, will it be all right with you if I pay half down now, and the rest when the job is finished?"

"Well, I don't like no cash money around the house, an' you done said you'd pay the agreed price. All I'll want is a little money to put in some new boiler tubes in the ol' mill to git started. When I needs mo' I'll ask fo' it. Ain't that all they is to it?" I nodded my head and he continued, "I know you boys is all right. You wouldn't be comin' clean down heah from Ioway a wantin' a little boat if you wasn't aimin' to pay fo' it."

There was just no getting Mr. Krebs on paper. The deal was closed by moving into the household and paying room and board to Ma Krebs at the rate of three dollars and fifty cents a week each.

That part of Pascagoula, bordering on a bayou called Krebs Lake, connecting with the sea through the lower reaches of the Pascagoula River, is known as Krebsville. This plot of about seven acres, originally settled by Grandfather Krebs, had been subdivided down through the succeeding generations. No true Krebs ever moved off the lot. The old one-story house with a porch on two sides, located on the road, was inhabited by Sidoine and Ma Krebs and the unmarried offspring: Bertie, Leo, Marietta, and Rosie. The eldest son, Roy, lived next door with his wife and three very small children. Hilda, the eldest daughter, lived on the lake and was married to a former coast guardsman, Stanley, better known as "Hacksaw." They were blessed, or cursed, with two small mischievous boys. Sylvester, Sidoine's brother, known only as "Uncle," lived back of the mill with his wife and no children. A cow and a calf, a few chickens, and a black dog obviously called "Nigger" made up the live stock. There was a pecan grove, a few satsuma trees and some indifferent vegetable gardens. A few tall yellow pines still stood, and patriarchal old live oaks bearded with Spanish moss gave ample shade around the homes. On the lake was the old sawmill, the tool shed, and another dilapidated building called the "office" where

Sidoine stored his models. A sawdust pile many years in the making threatened to overshadow the sawmill, and great piles of old lumber and bark slabs hid the small house of Hilda and “Hacksaw.” A seventy-foot smack with a red bottom and white topsides, built on speculation and never sold, occupied the central position in the shipyard.

In a few days the model was finished. It was neatly made of laminated wood, alternate red cedar and white cypress, twenty-one and a half inches long. Sidoine, with a visored cap advertising a brand of Mobile paint pushed far back on his head, squinted along the shearline.

“Now boys, I made her good an’ full so as we can cut her down with a spokeshave.”

We shaved a little off here and there, giving her a longer run aft and a narrower stern. With sandpaper we sharpened her forward at the waterline until the entrance lines were almost hollow. We fined her up as much as we dared, still leaving plenty of boat but sharp as a knife forward with a deep forefoot and a long clean run aft.

I was in love with the finished model. This built-up block of wood, shaped into curves and lines of beauty and symmetry, was something tangible. This half-inch-scale miniature multiplied by twenty-four would soon be our home, transportation, and life! Work just could not start soon enough.

While Roy and Uncle were overhauling the boiler in the mill, we went with Sidoine and combed the yards around the bayou for seasoned lumber. We helped snake huge cypress logs down the river to the runway of the sawmill. Forty miles we drove to a timber reserve for virgin long leaf yellow pine to make the masts and booms and lay the keel. Two trees, eighty feet to the nearest branch, were felled, dragged by oxen to the river, and towed by launch to the shipyard. An old man, a relic of sailing-ship days, with powerful shoulders and a bent back, was hired to shape the spars.

With the material on hand the work began. Chips, smelling strongly of turpentine in the keen winter air, flew from the sparmaker’s adze chopping steadily into the pitch-laden, fresh-cut pine. Stripped of the white sapwood, the dark heart pine, glistening in the sunlight, grew round and true. Smoke belched from the tall iron stack as a negro fireman in blue overalls, almost invisible in the shadowy mill,



shovelled in the dry pine chips. Pressure rose on the gauge and the live steam hissed from many leaks. The rumbling of the circular saw changed to a high-pitched scream as the sharp teeth bit into the huge logs, and thin slabs of bark fell away as the log moved slowly through on the carriage. The band saw cut through the thin wood patterns for the frames, piling up a giant's jig-saw puzzle on either side. Square timbers were dragged to a clear patch of ground. Krebs's shipyard after a long rest had come to life.

Work progressed rapidly in fine weather. The keel was laid and the frames branched out. A huge bent live oak log was shaped for the stern post, and the stem, a foot and a half through, rose in a graceful curve. Deck beams arched across. The lumber pile was looking like a ship.

In bad weather when the cold northerly wind brought rain, Mr. Krebs, bundled up to his chin, stood shivering in the lee of his tool shed, and blowing his large reddened nose, muttered about the "dirty ol' nor'wester."

"You cain't tell nothin' 'bout this weather no mo', Mr. Ray. Used to be I could tell by the moon, but they must o' somethin' happened 'cause you jest cain't tell nothin' no mo'.... I read somewheres it was them big guns shot off durin' the war."

"Papa," said Roy, "if we only could build them boats under a shed, look at the time we'd save."

"That sho' would facilate the work," sighed Mr. Krebs, looking wistfully at the rain-drenched yard.

"My ain't it cold, papa?" said Roy, swinging his arms.

"Awful dirty ol' nor'wester, awful, awful! Son, I'm gettin' too ol' to work in this weather."

"No you ain't, papa. It's just because you is all crippled up with rheumatics."

"Tain't that so much as it is my bronckeetis." Turning to me he added, "Mr. Ray, let's go to the house and see if the old lady has got some coffee hot."

"Papa," said Roy brightening, "you ain't aimin' to work to-day?"

“No, son, a man cain’t do no good cold as it is. No suh!”

Although not yet mid-morning, it had been definitely decided that no work would be done that day. Even though the sun came out later, the Gods of Weather had sent the dirty ole nor’wester to humbug Mr. Krebs. The sturdy frames of our ship were left alone, deserted to the chill north wind; light chips banked against the keel and little whirlwinds of sawdust swirled across the newly-laid decks.

Before the warm cookstove, drawing-board across my knees, I scaled out the sail plan of the ship, ketch rigged. Sidoine, looking on with ill-concealed disapproval, remarked:

“Now, Mr. Ray, I don’t like to tell no man his business, but you done got the mainmas’ in the wrong place. This heah little schooner is rigged backwa’ds and she ain’t agoin’ to sail.”

“This isn’t a schooner, Sidoine, it’s a ketch, and the mains’l is forward with the smaller sail, the mizzen, aft.”

“A *sketch* you say? Look heah, son, at this heah new rig.” He called to Roy.

Photographs, sepia with age, were produced showing most of the thirty-five ships Krebs had built, mute testimonials for the schooner rig. I found a picture of a transatlantic racer, ketch rigged, which I proudly showed to Sidoine as definite proof that there was such a thing. The Atlantic was beyond his geographical scope and, therefore, beside the point. Unconvinced, he shook his head sadly.

“She might do up No’th like you say, but she won’t do out in this heah guff, no suh. This guff is a awful place.”

To Mr. Krebs the farthest points away from Pascagoula were Mexico and Michigan. If you mentioned anywhere else you were dealing with astronomy and its inconceivable distances in “light years.”

There was nothing else to be done in bad weather except argue around the cookstove while the “women folk” boiled chicoried coffee and baked corn sticks. Every rainy day put launching day just that much farther ahead, and we chafed at the delay, hating the “dirty ol’ nor’wester’s” as much as Mr. Krebs.

The next big job was planking, and Gerry and I were in for our full share of labour, driving and countersinking the five-inch spikes. We made good progress, and I promised that when the shutter (the last strake of planking) was in place we would all knock off a day and celebrate by going fishing to Bayou Battre, with a gallon of moonshine to “grease the hooks.” This announcement pushed work up to top speed, but the net result proved a dead loss. The Krebses started getting in each other’s way and tempers grew short. Hacksaw, working a little too leisurely, received many an angry glance.

Finally Roy said, “Hacksaw, you ain’t hardly done a lick all day.”

“The hell I ain’t.”

“You been workin’ fo’ the govamint so long you got one o’ them coast gua’d chests.”

“Yeah? ... It takes a better man than you to get into the coast guard!”

“You do some ha’d work around heah an’ you’ll lose that coast gua’d chest,” laughed Roy, patting his stomach.

This threw Hacksaw in a swearing rage and Roy into uncontrollable fits of laughter. Hacksaw finally dropped his tools and stamped off home.

Sidoine had been driving Uncle all day, and when Uncle remarked:

“Comin’ from the No’th and joinin’ the coastgua’d both done make Hacksaw no good.”

Sidoine retorted, “Uncle, you mine yo’ own damn’ business.”

“You cain’t talk thataway to me payin’ as little as you do.”

“You ain’t no ship’s carpenter nohow. You ain’t even a house carpenter, you is just in the road.”

“You can all go plumb to hell,” shouted Uncle, and throwing his tools on the ground, headed for his corner of Krebsville.

“Papa, you hadn’t oughta talk to Uncle thataway.”

Sidoine about to reply stopped dead before a newly laid out plank.

“Who put the bevel on this heah plank on the wrong side?”

“I ain’t troubled it, papa. You done it yo’self.”

“That ain’t true. I seen you planin’ on it.” He knocked it off the sawhorses. “This work is a humbug, somethin’ always humbuggin’ me. I cain’t get no good he’p no mo’. Awful, awful. I cain’t depend on nobody.” He shook his head sadly. “I’m getting too ol’ to do all the work.”

Roy, the only one left in good humour, said, “It don’t look like that shutter is a goin’ in today, so I might as well lock up the tools an’ go home.”

It was mid-afternoon when work stopped, but I was worried about the next day. I talked to Gerry, and we conceived the idea of using our gallon of moonshine to placate the shipyard hands. That evening, as ambassadors of good will, we made the four corners of Krebsville with disastrous results. Hacksaw went to town and never showed up for two days. Uncle’s wife chased poor Uncle off the front porch with a broom. Sidoine fell over at the dinner table and stuck his nose in the hot grits. He then staggered off to bed muttering, “Awful, awful, awful.”

We felt so badly about all this that we drove to New Orleans to see if legal whisky had a better effect. The day after next, when we returned, we were not greeted with the welcome sounds of hammering and sawing, and Mr. Krebs was found hovering over the cookstove. I asked him what the trouble was and why he hadn’t been working. He mentioned something about the “dirty ol’ nor’wester” and finally confessed.

“Mr Ray, there ain’t no use in hidin’ the devil under a bush. We all done had too much to drink.”

Reflecting on our handiwork, I realized it would be some time before the fatal shutter was ever in place. We firmly resolved never again to attempt to speed up production above the normal pace, but to quench our Yankee impetuosity and let the work continue in the more leisurely and perhaps better method of the deep South.

As the news of our venture spread around, we received many letters of application for additional crew. It was amazing the number of people who were



absolutely willing to furnish all their energy and, in many cases, their vast experience entirely free of charge; yet no one wrote us offering to share expenses. We were on the market for another man who was willing to pay his own way. Finally we received a letter from J. Morrow Allen, a freelance scientist. He wrote us about the money to be had collecting specimens from out-of-the-way islands and the hinterland of little-known (scientifically) countries. Nicaragua and the coastal islands off South America were his ambition. He had previous experience and had led several expeditions after herpetological lore. He would arrange to pay his own expenses and split the profits of the expedition. As we had mutual friends in Biloxi, and were going to Central America anyway, we agreed to take him.

In a few weeks he moved down from Indianapolis and a cot was put in our bedroom. The three of us lived among cabin lamps, ventilators, port lights, compasses, and other ship's gear, with guns, ammunition, and personal baggage taking up all the available floor space. We crawled over piles of gear to get to bed.

Allen, tall, blond, and handsome, went to work with enthusiasm on the boat. In the evenings he wrote many letters to various museums and zoos for orders for specimens. The answers received covered a wide scope. We had requests for live boa constrictors and jaguars and orders for enough pickled frogs, snakes, lizards, and turtles to fill a witch's cauldron. Herpetology, Allen explained, was his long suit, but he could collect *anything*. He discoursed at length not only on poisonous snakes and fearsome beasts, but on the birds and butterflies of the deep jungle, slowly making us realize that Beebe, Frank Buck, and the boys from the American Museum of Natural History were small potatoes. In these days of uncertain stocks, the pickled snake business seemed a sound investment. Frogs began to mean something more than fish bait or a table delicacy, and we followed local lizards about with greedy eyes. God's crawling creatures would soon be converted into cold cash.

Spring comes early on the Gulf coast, and March was warm and dry with no weather to humbug Mr. Krebs. The last strake of planking was bent in place, and the engine, a second-hand tractor motor converted for marine duty, was installed. We were excited at the prospect of launching day, and I busily drew up plans for the interior. Mr. Krebs, half asleep by the stove, paid no attention to the planning until he heard the word "fish," and then he opened his eyes and leaned forward. Gerry, Allen, and I were talking of the possibilities of collecting fish as

well as reptiles and amphibians. When I finished with the plans, I showed them to Sidoine, who put on his glasses and studied them carefully.

“Now you boys knows what you want, an’ I don’t like to tell no man his business, but you all done fo’ got to put in them iceboxes. You all got bunks an’ such where them ice-boxes had ought to be. It won’t do,” Sidoine said earnestly.

“This is a yacht, not a fishing boat,” I retorted.

“But I heard you say you was agoin’ to catch fish.”

“Oh, but we intend to pickle the fish in formalin,” Gerry started to explain.

“Pickled in what? Now I want to tell you all somethin’. I been buildin’ fishin’ smacks mo’n thirty yeahs, an’ they has all got coke insulated ice-boxes in ’em. Yes suh!”

“Fish can be kept in a diluted solution of formalin,” said Allen. “There ain’t no market fo’ pickled fish. Fish has got to be fresh to sell,” said Sid, his jaws working furiously on a good handful of scrap tobacco.

Allen tried to explain, but the more scientific he became the more angry was Sidoine.

“Ain’t I seen the ‘Snappa King’ comin’ up the Pascagoula River an’ unloadin’ fish on the wha’f with the inspector right theah condemnin’ them that ain’t fresh? Leo!” he called loudly, “fetch my box!”

His box was a specially built spittoon about eighteen inches square and filled with sand. It was lost, as usual, which stopped the argument, because Sidoine was speechless with his cheeks puffed from too much tobacco. When the box was found and our laughter had subsided, Sidoine never brought up the subject again, but he cast many a questioning look at the scientist. But whenever a friend visiting the yard remarked: “She’s a nice little model, Sidoine,” Mr. Krebs always replied, “As pretty a little boat as ever sat on the ways.” He then looked around to see if Allen and I were about, and in a lower voice added, “But she ain’t got no ice-boxes in her, and the Captain is sho’ goin’ to rig hu backwa’ds.”

On cold mornings Roy and I often converged on the little outhouse in the centre

of the cow pasture. As there was room for two, we often discussed the day's work or shiveringly complained of the inconveniences of outside plumbing. Roy proudly explained that he had gone modern and had an inside toilet.

"But," he added, "this time of morning with the wife awashin' three kids, it just weren't no use waitin'."

"I wish Sidoine's house was modern," I said, watching a cockroach disappear in an incredibly small crack.

"The ol' man just won't have no inside plumbin'," said Roy.

"Why not?" I asked.

"You know, me an' Malcolm who's a plumba has had a extry toilet for five yeahs, but do you think the ol' man will let us install it? No. When I ask him, he says, 'Roy, I won't have no back house in my home 'cause it ain't no ways sanitary.'"

Launching day was set for next week and all hands were busy painting and caulking. The interior was finished. Forward were two double bunks, next the chart room and toilet; amidship was the main cabin with two bunks faced by two settees the same length with a drop leaf table between them. The engine-room and galley combined, with an extra bunk, were aft. She was roomy and well ventilated and painted white enamel with a stained mahogany trim. Outside she was white with grey decks and a red waterline. The little model had been multiplied by twenty-four and the results were beyond our expectations. She was a real little ship, looking much larger than her specified length.

The customs came to measure the boat for the registration. I told the official that she was forty-three feet long by thirteen beam. We stretched the tape—she was forty-five feet overall and her beam was almost fourteen feet! No wonder my arrangement plans hadn't quite fitted the actual hull. I recalled how Mr. Krebs had measured all material for the boat with a two-foot rule, going over the timber like a measuring worm and punctuating each two-foot mark with tobacco juice.

I called, "Sidoine, this ship is two feet longer and nine inches wider than she was supposed to be."

Mr. Krebs looked guilty. He dropped his tools and climbed up the ladder to the deck. "You say she's bigga than what she ought to be?"

Gerry and the customs on either end of the tape confirmed her length as forty-five feet. Roy and Allen stopped painting below and joined the circle.

Roy said, "That ain't nothin'. Papa always builds 'em a little bigga than the model."

Mr. Krebs apologetically explained: "Well, you see it's this-away, boys. I done built as pretty a little smack as they is on the guff fo' a man down in Luzianna. After she was la'nched an' we was fixin' up the papers, he accused me of violatin' the contract what called fo' a seventy-five foot boat an' she measured by the customs to just seventy-fo' feet and three inches, an' he done paid me a hundred dolla's sho't fo' them nine inches."

"That was hardly fair," said Gerry.

"Sho' it weren't fair. So I says to Roy, 'From now on we are buildin' boats jest a little bigga than the model so as they won't be no complaints.' "

"This little boat has sho' growed some, papa. It stretched out two feet!" said Roy.

We all felt a tense excitement. The big day was drawing near. The scaffoldings were knocked down and the ways built under the ship. In a day or so the paint would be dry. Waiting for the ship to take to the water was like waiting for a birth. The shipyard was the mother who, after months of labour, was about to produce a child of your own creation, and during these last few days, the shipyard was really having labour pains. Roy, juggling hundred-pound bilge blocks around the yard, expressed his feelings, "As soon as that bastard is in the bayou, I'm a goin' to *set down* !"

The ship would have a painful birth, she had grown so big for her mother's womb.

The day for launching arrived. Everyone who had anything to do with the construction of the boat was on hand. The blacksmith who had made the ironwork, tall and gaunt with huge ears bracing up a wide-brimmed hat, strode around the yard in a long, black frock coat. So long were his legs and so high his waist that the ship chandler down from Mobile for the launching said that he was

split up the middle like a pair of dividers. The engineer who had rebuilt the old tractor engine and the plumber who had installed the tanks were on hand in their Sunday clothes to sample the “la’nching whisky.” The sparmaker was there; and the old caulker with the long flowing white moustache, who had kept us in suspense while caulking the decks, fearful lest this moustache would become mixed with the cotton and he would hammer himself fast to the deck seams. The Krebs family was there in full force; the women folk in Sunday clothes and the small children romping in the sawdust pile; but the four shipyard hands were in work clothes, standing by to knock the wedges out from behind the bilge blocks. Even Nigger, the little dog who had grown up with the ship, was there, hungrily licking the tallow off the ways.

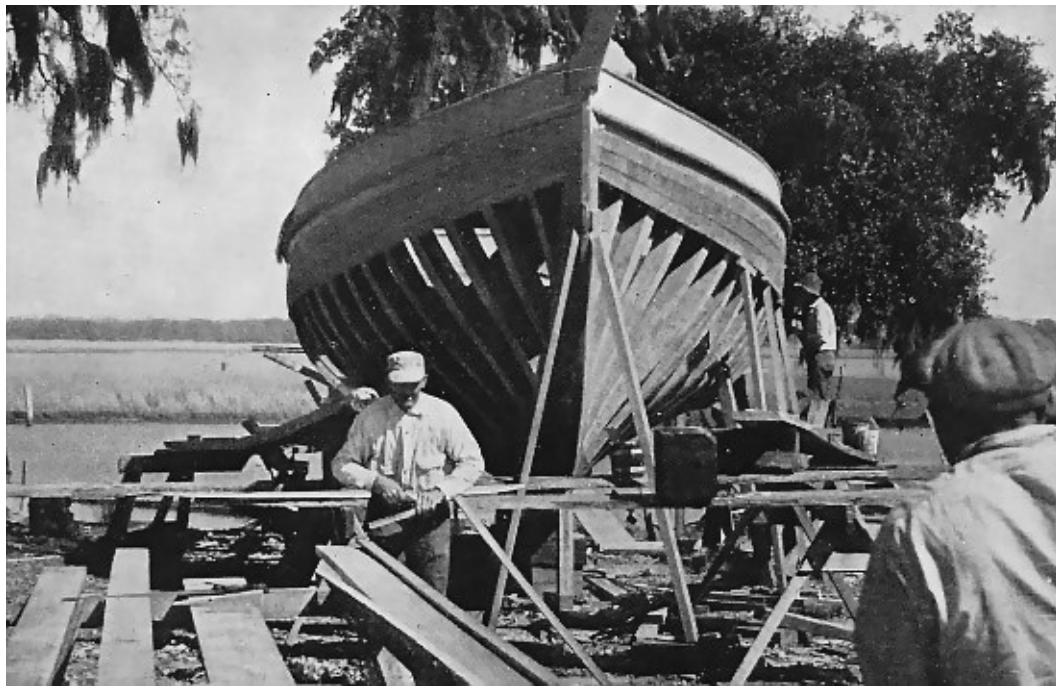
Friends, neighbours and in-laws, the curious and the loafers, regular hands at funerals, births, weddings, and launchings, gathered on the yard and circulated around the pump under the huge live oak tree festooned with grey moss, where the “la’nching whisky” was kept cool in gallon stone jugs. Spirits rose as the jug passed around and the tide came in. The bayou would soon be deep enough. An old river tug backed up at the foot of the ways, and with her nose against a piling churned up the muddy bottom to increase the depth.

By the time the tide was in and the bayou pronounced deep enough the crowd was hilarious; but, at the sound of the heavy mall striking the hardwood wedges, they quieted down and formed a semicircle around the bow for the christening. No champagne foamed over the sturdy stem. She was not that kind of ship, but a child of the cypress swamps and the tidewater marshes. She was gently baptized with a conservative amount of Mississippi corn whisky poured from a stone jug, properly anointed with a liberal amount of tobacco juice, and named the *Hurricane*.

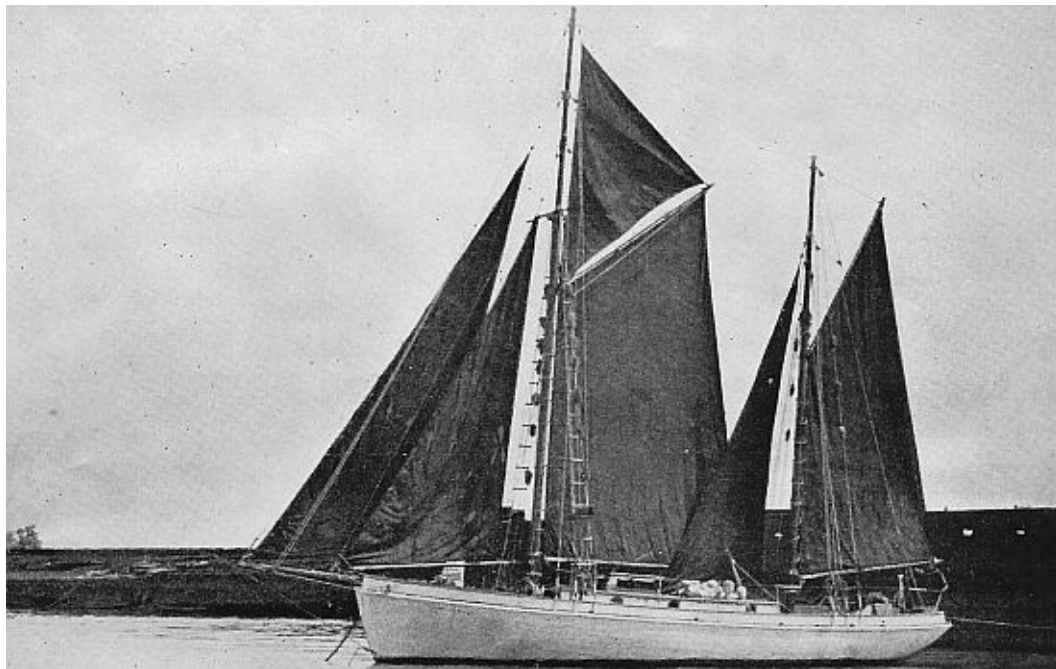
As the wedges were driven out, she rocked uneasily in her cradle, moved slowly backwards a foot or so, then gathering momentum, rushed down the greased ways and plunged into the muddy bayou. The cheering of the spectators drowned the noise made by twenty tons of wood and iron being born a ship. Floating high like a duck, she sailed backwards across the stream and fetched up in the saw grass on the other side.



*The Skipper in the official trade wind uniform since Tahiti.*



*The sturdy frames branched out - she was looking like a ship.*



*The Hurricane trying on her new tan-barked sails in Singapore.*



## Chapter II

IN the lower reaches of the Pascagoula River, alongside the fish wharf, we waited in a drizzling rain for the last of our fresh stores to come aboard. The *Hurricane*, her new paint and freshly greased spars beaded with rain, was ready for sea. Gerry and I paced restlessly up and down the slippery wharf, and I thought of two years' planning and six months' hard work, but I did not realize that the climax of a life's ambition, the culmination of a dream, was twenty-odd tons of wood, iron, and canvas that smelled of lead paint and cordage. Allen was stowing his gear forward. Sidoine and Roy Krebs were tinkering with the engine. They were going with us as far as Florida on their first sea voyage. With the same philosophy as the bootlegger who drank his own whisky, they had decided to embark in their own handiwork.

All hands were physically tired. The last ten days had been back-breaking work: stepping the masts, fitting the booms and rigging, bending the sails, chucking in ten tons of ballast, and stowing our gear. Then those innumerable details: lists had been made out and checked off for six months' supply of food; tools and equipment for most any emergency had been carefully selected; films and photographic equipment, dry grocery items, flour, sugar, rice, beans, etc., had been sealed in moisture-proof containers. Two hundred and seventy-five gallons of water and one hundred and fifty gallons of gasoline had been taken aboard, and the *Hurricane* was down to her waterline.

When the grocery man arrived with our fresh stores, the rain had stopped and a crowd gathered on the jetty. It was late afternoon. There was little or no wind.

"Good God, I hope she'll sail," I said to Gerry, and went below to look at the chart of Horn Island Pass from the sound to the sea. Allen went down with Roy to start the engine. Gerry was busy trying to hide his excitement. I was worried about going to sea in an untried ship. As a rigger and designer, I was calling my own bluff.

The dinghy was hoisted aboard and the line cast loose. Under power the *Hurricane* moved rapidly away from the wharf. We hoisted the sails, but the stiff new canvas scarcely filled in the faint east breeze. Out of the river and across the

sound we sailed, making the pass by dark. The swell of the Gulf rolled in. The *Hurricane* had put to sea. Rolling gently, the engine churned up a phosphorescent wake and pushed us eastward through the windless night.

In the morning a light breeze came out of the south and I shut off the motor. Quietly slipping through the blue, slowly heeling to the freshening wind, she sailed well balanced.

“Come on deck, Mr. Krebs, and watch this ‘schooner rigged backwards’ sail,” I shouted.

We slacked off and raced before the breeze, ducked our heads and jibed ship, then trimmed her on the wind; I put the helm hard over and she came smartly about. When the sails filled on the other tack, I looked at Sidoine with an “I told you so” expression and headed once more for Florida, silencing for ever his dire predictions about the sail plan. The *Hurricane* was a success.

Three days later off Florida a black northwester blew hard, then whipped into the southwest and blew a gale all night with plenty of rain. We backed the staysail, sheeted in the mizzen, and lashed the helm to windward. Comfortably hove to we slept below with only one man on watch. The *Hurricane*, pointing well up in the wind, was steady and easy, and I realized, that night of our first strong blow, that if we kept her off the bottom she would be as safe as any ship at sea.

We said good-bye to Roy and Sidoine at Cedar Keys. My family came down to see us off, crowding aboard the *Hurricane*, my small nephews going over the boat like squirrels in a cage. The pain of parting was lessened by the enthusiasm over the new ship. My father gave us a letter of credit “just in case,” and the world lay before us.

In a strong breeze we sailed south for Key West to clear for foreign ports and found it rough outside. Green hands that we were, we could not fill that important post, the galley. A parting gift, a fully-dressed chicken, spoiled in the ice-box, but when the wind and sea went down, we regretted that chicken consigned to the sharks.

In Key West we cleared for Mexico’s Cozumel Island and looked about for a hand to do the dirty work. The Cayman Island negroes on their large schooners, up from the banks off Nicaragua with turtles, were real sailors, but they wanted thirty dollars a month, and it wasn’t in the budget, so the afterguard of

the *Hurricane* continued to take turns in the dishpan.

With fine weather and a light fair wind we sailed to the Dry Tortugas, caught plenty of fish, then headed across the Gulf Stream until we picked up the lights of Cuba's northern coast. In a freshening breeze we ran off to the west, skirting the dangerous Colorados reefs to the western extremity of the island. We crossed the Yucatan channel, and on the morning of the fifth day at sea the palm trees of the low coastal island of Mujeres showed above the horizon. The deep blue water changed to light green as we passed the north point and rounded up for the anchorage. Our first foreign port, painted with the tropical colours of Mexico, sheltered the ship from the sea.

It was hot in the blazing sun, out of the wind, and I thought of cold beer ashore. Gerry combed his hair for the benefit of the señoritas, but Allen was commercial-minded and overhauled his collecting gear. Interested, we watched the guns and traps and little canvas carrying bags that were destined to convert the lowly reptile into ham and eggs.

The Capitan de Puerto came off in a little boat, dwarfed by the huge red, white and green flag of Mexico flying lazily over the stem.

Gerry said, "Buenos dias."

The captain said, "Good morning."

Then a dead silence reigned. Both parties had exhausted their respective exchange of languages. Dumbly we were led ashore and up the sandy street to a combination store and saloon. The storekeeper knew a few words of English; but before I could get in our normal yachtsmen's request for fresh food and cold drink, Allen asked about the lizard and snake population of Mujeres.

A look of utter amazement crossed the merchant's face. He said, "Sneks . . . leezards?"

Gerry and I smiled. His features relaxed and he uncorked a bottle of Habenero, set three glasses on the counter and charged us five cents American for the three drinks, establishing an all time, world wide, low price for liquor.

Collecting was not good on the island and Allen was disgusted. The few iguanas he had shot and given to the natives to carry were taken home for the cook pot

instead of aboard the boat for a proper injection of formalin, so we sailed for our destination fifty miles down the coast of Yucatan.

Cozumel is an island twenty-five miles long, and the port San Miguel boasts a population of over a thousand. The anchorage was secure and the water was so clear that bottom was easily seen sixty feet under the keel. A few people spoke English in the town, and they informed Allen that the island was overrun with lizards, but snakes were scarce. Encouraged, we settled down in the lizard business. We were generally acknowledged to be “touristas muy rico,” and were taken from one end of the island to the other, photographing the old Mayan ruins and occasionally potting a miniature prehistoric monster, the horny iguana. Everywhere we were hospitably received, and as “touristas” were above reproach.

The main store in town had an ice machine. Gerry and I spent many a hot afternoon sipping cold Montezuma beer and brushing up on our Spanish, while Allen was literally beating around the bush.

However, we found this collecting business hard to explain. Daylight shooting was accepted with a slight sneer; the iguana was used for food, especially among “Los Indios”; but, when Allen, in order to round out his collection, started hunting at night for less common herpetological specimens, Latin-American suspicion got the better of their hospitality. Searching the foundations of old houses, crawling down abandoned wells, and combing the bottom of slimy limestone sinks was something “touristas” just didn’t do. Our reputation was not enhanced by our most valuable accomplice in these night expeditions, a Chinese, the sole occupant of the local bastille awaiting deportation. There was no lock on the door of the jail, so he had the run of the island and was always willing to climb down into an old well after frogs or toads for a very small amount of money. Allen’s zeal often led him to fire upon the small night lizards crawling along the walls of the houses in the inhabited parts of town, and in Mexico a shot in the dark means a subsequent daylight search for a dead body.

This peculiar behaviour was officially noticed, and one morning all hands were haled before the local magistrate for questioning. Allen, eloquent in the name of science, explained that the little furtive creatures lurking about Cozumel were very much like other little species on the mainland. Down through the millions of generations that the island had been separated from the mainland, these creatures, by the theory of natural selection, were slightly different, and the

outside world was anxiously awaiting to find out just what the difference was. Gerry and I, impressed, backed him up without success. To a Mexican, a lizard was a lizard and was good or bad, depending on how it was cooked. Therefore, we must be in the espionage business. The freedom of the island was no longer ours, and we were prohibited from going ashore unless accompanied by a local policeman. Night hunting was definitely out.

Only one policeman was detailed for the job of following us about; and, by taking turns going ashore for long hikes, we quickly wore him down. By the middle of the second day he gave up the struggle and refused to move from the shady part of the public square. Excitement over the “American spies” soon quieted down and, as we continued to be good customers of the saloon, whose proprietor was San Miguel’s leading merchant, we were allowed to continue our work unmolested. Mexican officialdom had saved their face, smoothed their pride, and tickled their vanity by showing their teeth.

Leaving the island as friendly as we had found it, with four five-gallon tins of pickled herpetological specimens aboard, we headed south once more, planning to stop at Ascension Bay, where Allen wanted to augment his collection from the mainland. A light breeze took us down the coast and across the bar into the bay. We anchored off a broken-down jetty at Vigia Chica, which is scarcely a town, the population being only fifteen Mexicans and one Belize negro. The latter arranged for a guide and an expedition inland up a railway with a diminutive mule for motive power.

Away from the sea it was hot and dry and we tramped the parched bush of the chicory country without results. Allen bemoaned the fact that snakes would be scarce until the rainy season. One night, with the thermometer just under one hundred, Allen and I walked to a small water hole and sat around fighting mosquitoes, hoping that anything that walked or crawled would come down for a drink. After about two hours our faces and arms were quite bloody from insect bites. The Mexican Indian guide put his fingers to his lips for silence. At the edge of the tiny pond, two large eyes reflected the starlight. Allen pulled the trigger of the twelve-gauge shotgun. The noise close to my ear was deafening. The eyes disappeared, and so did everything else in the bush for that night.

Returning to the boat, our little Mexican Indian guide helped carry our gear aboard. His name was Hector Emanuel Gonzales Brito; he was five feet and no inches tall, with a profile like Buster Keaton and a full facade like a mural painting of an Aztec Indian. Fascinated by the *Hurricane*, he insisted upon spending the night.

In the morning I was awakened by the rattling of pots and pans and, looking around for the ship's hero, discovered the afterguard still asleep, but found Hector washing the dishes and scrubbing our cooking utensils until they looked like new. Cooking we tolerated but, to a man, loathed washing dishes. I told Gerry that a five-foot dishwashing machine shouldn't take much fuel, and I signed him on by introducing him to the end man's position on the anchor chain; and, by the time he regained his breath, the *Hurricane* was standing out to sea, bound for British Honduras.

After dark the wind freshened. The last light on the Mexican coast gave us a friendly wink, and the *Hurricane*, heeling well over, split the black water with a wide path of foam. Hector, after making a nest in the after bunk, poked his head out of the companionway. When he saw the white crest of a wave spilling over toward the ship, considerably above the level of his eyes, he exclaimed, "Oles grandes!" and crawled back into his hole for the night.

On entering the wide channel between the off-lying reefs and the mainland, the sea lessened considerably. I was straining on the helm and watching the tall spars trace slow curves on the clear night sky when a *crash*, then a dull bumping noise, made the hull tremble. I put the tiller hard over and the ship came up into the wind, shaking herself like a dog out of water. Gerry and Allen came on deck in pajamas, dodging the swinging main boom. We sounded. No bottom. Slowly the sails filled on the other tack and sounding again found no bottom with twenty fathoms of line straight out. There was no roar of surf and nothing visible but a black horizon all around. Gradually the tension relaxed. The ship was making no water and our charted position was well off shore. I thought it was probably a mahogany log from the rivers of Honduras, but my heart was pounding from holding my breath many anxious moments.

Daylight found us off the harbour entrance of Belize. A negro pilot with an English accent came aboard from a small sailing vessel and took us into the anchorage off the river mouth in front of the town. In the fresh breeze the anchorage was pleasant and cool; but at night, when the wind came off the land,

the smell was hard to endure. Black Belize is so close to sea level that the sewerage system is a network of open canals. At nine p.m., negroes carry buckets of sewage from the homes and empty them into the canals. Most of the white residents manage to keep to windward of this “distressing nine o’clock business,” but we were forced to stay close to the river to load fuel and supplies for our trip into the interior of Nicaragua.

The worst about Belize was no fault of the town but the name of our ship! Two years before our arrival, another small ship of the same name and with the same port of registry on the stem, Miami, Florida, sailed into the harbour. On the following day a real hurricane swept over the town. The hurricane wrecked the *Hurricane*, among other craft, and wrought havoc ashore, leaving two thousand dead and scarcely a building intact. This tragic coincidence was first recounted to us by the negro pilot. Then everywhere ashore we heard the same story until we ran through the scale of feigned emotions and could no longer look interested, sympathetic, or surprised when a well-meaning citizen stopped us on the street or interrupted the smooth passage of a glass of beer from counter to lips to spellbind us with the greatest coincidence in Belize’s history, or horrify us with dire predictions of the evil omen in the ship’s destructive name.

Allen shipped our unwholesome cargo, the twenty-five-gallon Cozumel collection, to the States and we made ready for sea. Nicaragua was just around the corner, Cape Gracias A Dios, but it was a three-hundred-and-fifty-mile corner, lying dead to windward. The rainy season, which would have been welcome in semi-arid Yucatan, was almost upon us; and these torrential rains in Nicaragua, the pilot book warned us, meant floods. Allen was in low spirits. With too much rain, he explained, the animals would fail to come out and balance the ship’s budget.

The first two days at sea we lived on calms and squalls, and when the north-east trades did set in, they were too fresh for effective windward work. Under shortened sail we beat back and forth, smashing into steep seas with the lee rail awash and clouds of spray coming clear over the cockpit. The bearings on the mountain peaks of Honduras changed little by little as we worked hard to make good to windward. Too new at cruising to resign ourselves to the conditions of bad weather or contrary winds, we brought the ship about more often than necessary to take advantage of every slant of wind. Allen, restless and worried about the rainy season, was continually swearing at the perversity of the weather. Gerry and I tried to make life more interesting by competing in the

galley to see who could serve corned beef under the best disguise. Hector, slowly learning his way about the ship, cared little about the speed or the direction of wind. His day was just three meals long.

Late one afternoon after three days of relentless head winds, we closed with two small islands ten miles off the mainland. These twin mountain peaks rising six hundred feet out of the blue were scarcely a mile and a half long. A smooth sheet of water opened up between them. We slipped in, anchoring in a little cove close to shore. Grateful to be out of the weather, we watched the white horses charge by outside and the clouds rush over our ceiling. Gerry dug under a bunk and came up with a tinned ham, luxury of luxuries. Spirits were higher than the strong east wind, and I prepared a real shore dinner with the pots and pans lying strangely inert on a level stove top.

After all hands slept the clock around, we poked our noses outside in a wind respectable enough not to blow the hair off our heads. I changed tactics by sailing close inshore at night, taking advantage of the light breeze off the land, and standing out to sea during the day. The miles made good to the eastward were as low as fifteen miles in a twenty-four-hour day, the best was only sixty-five. Allen tried the isolation cure by holing up forward and coming out only for his watch and meals. With the optimism based on inexperience, I had promised to be in Nicaragua before the rains. It wasn't until the tenth day that Cape Gracias a Dios was rounded in a violent thunderstorm, and I offered a silent prayer as the well-named cape dropped behind us and the ship raced south in a fair wind at last. Down through the Mosquito Keys and reefs in a procession of hard rain squalls, the *Hurricane* several times logged twenty-five nautical miles in a three-hour watch. We might not beat the rainy season, but we were giving the floods a good race and the sanity of the scientist was saved.

Just two weeks out of Belize we anchored off the customs wharf at Bluefields Bluff and ran immediately into trouble. An ugly crowd gathered on the jetty. The port authorities shouted across that they had no boat of their own and, unless we wanted to pay for hiring one, we must launch our skiff and send for them. I sent Hector in the dinghy and the aduaneros came off in full force in sloppy uniforms. Sullen and suspicious, they trooped below. An English-speaking agent, as interpreter, demanded our papers. I showed our bill of health and customs clearance from Belize. Most everything was wrong; we had no cargo manifest, no crew or passenger list; the clearance and bill of health were not indorsed by a Nicaraguan consul; and we had purposely insulted the Republic by



failing to fly the blue and white Nicaraguan flag. I explained that as a pleasure yacht there was neither cargo nor passengers and that no consul was available in Belize. They said they made no exceptions for yachts and levied an imposing list of fines totaling more than three hundred dollars! In the meantime we could consider the ship in the hands of the customs, and if we attempted to move we would be fired on by the Guardia Nacional stationed on the bluff. If we paid the fines in cash, the ship would be released immediately and we could proceed to Panama.

We were within the law and had violated no shipping regulations pertaining to yachts, and I felt like loading the 30-40 and declaring war.

I told the agent, “We will stay here ’til the boat grows to the bottom, but we won’t pay you one cent over the regulation port dues.”

The agent failed to interpret this to the customs but answered in a conspiratory tone, “Capitan, I theenk eet ees posseeble for me to save you money. I will ask the aduaneros to reduce these fines to . . . let us say . . . half?”

“No!” I shouted. “Not one damn cent!”

The agent shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of finality and turning to the customs explained our stubbornness. He looked back at me with a conciliatory smile. “Capitan, zee aduaneros say to me they will make t’ese monies smaller so you can pay and no be delayed.”

Gerry said to me, “Coppy, tell ’em to go to hell.”

I did.

They left us, stating that we were under arrest, and climbed over the stern into the dinghy, with our yacht ensign flickering shadows over their heads, still adamant but with a look of defeat.

Next morning we were taken across the lagoon to the town of Bluefields and marched before the governor. On the way I stopped at a subsidiary office of the United Fruit Company and cabled the U.S. Department of State.

The governor received us like criminals. He was curious and suspicious. We held our tempers and explained decently what we were doing, in turn asking him the

reason for the seizure of the boat and our present arrest. The customs officials answered for him and we arrived at the same deadlock. I still refused to spend money on Nicaraguan charity.

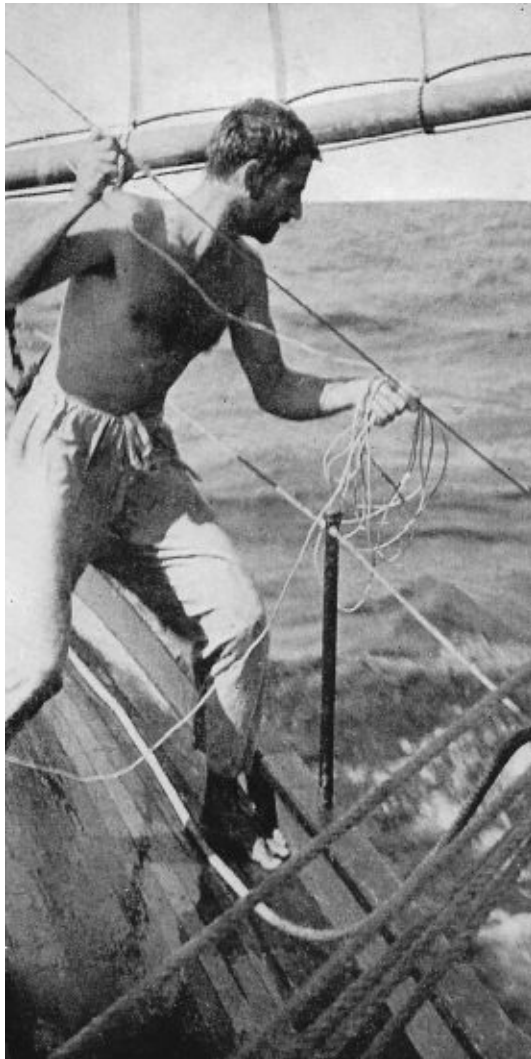
Two days later, the copy of a cable signed by the U.S. Department of State was delivered respectfully aboard. The original had been sent to our friend the governor, requesting in very definite terms the immediate release of the yacht, that all charges be withdrawn, and that we be allowed to continue our scientific work in the interior.

The governor sent for us again. This time without questions he gave us permits for our guns and ammunition, also letters requesting the help and protection of the Guardia Nacional and added his own good wishes. Free men, we walked the town and made hasty preparations to be off up the river.

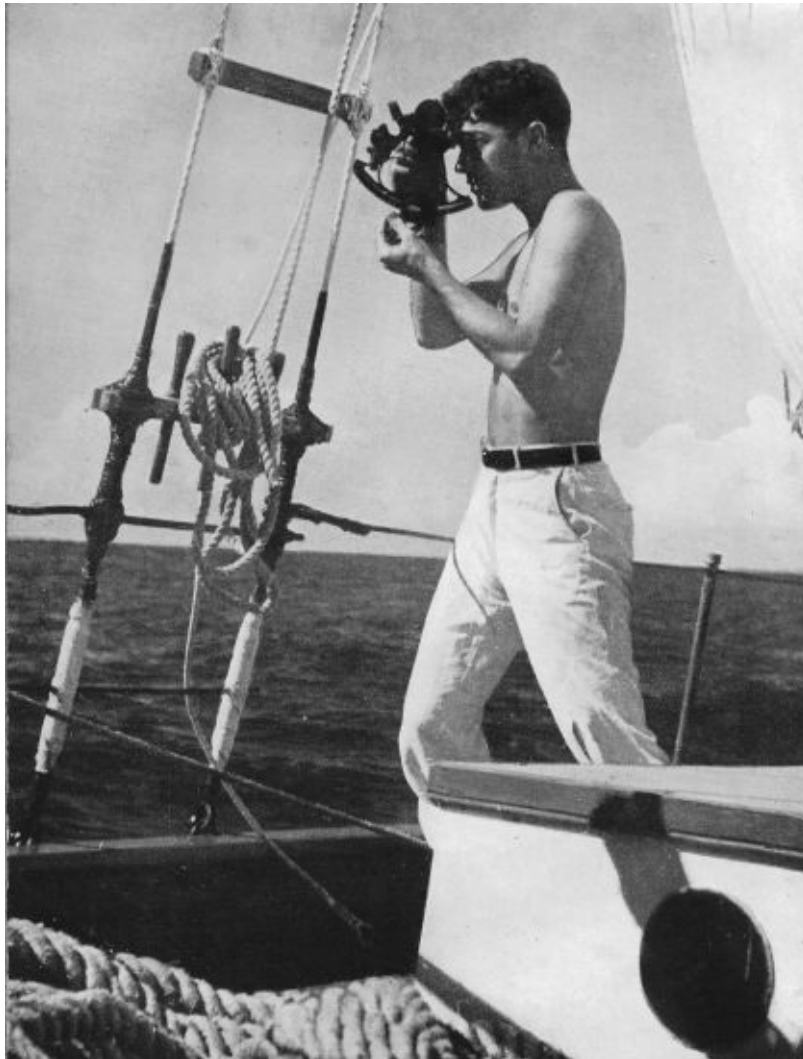
Back at El Bluff we bought and hoisted a Nicaraguan flag and invited all the officials aboard for drinks. They were good losers. The gin and the blue and white bunting aloft made them our friends. I think if we had started with the gin and apologies for the flag, we might have saved ourselves the price of a cable.



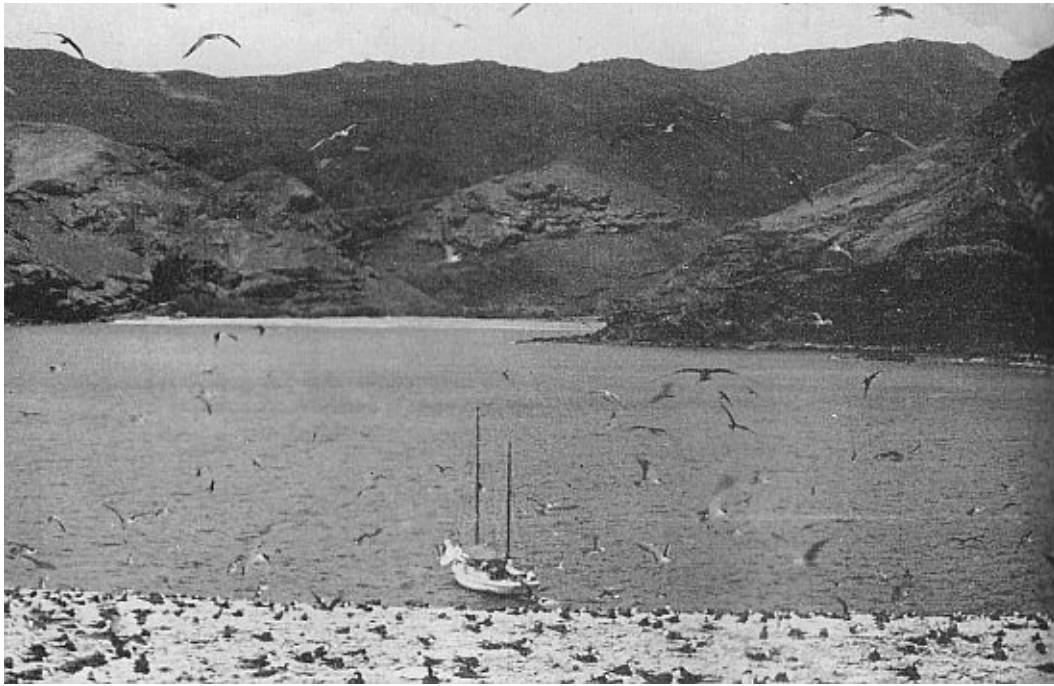
*Hector, raised in the bush, was a good hunter, but he never learned to cook.*



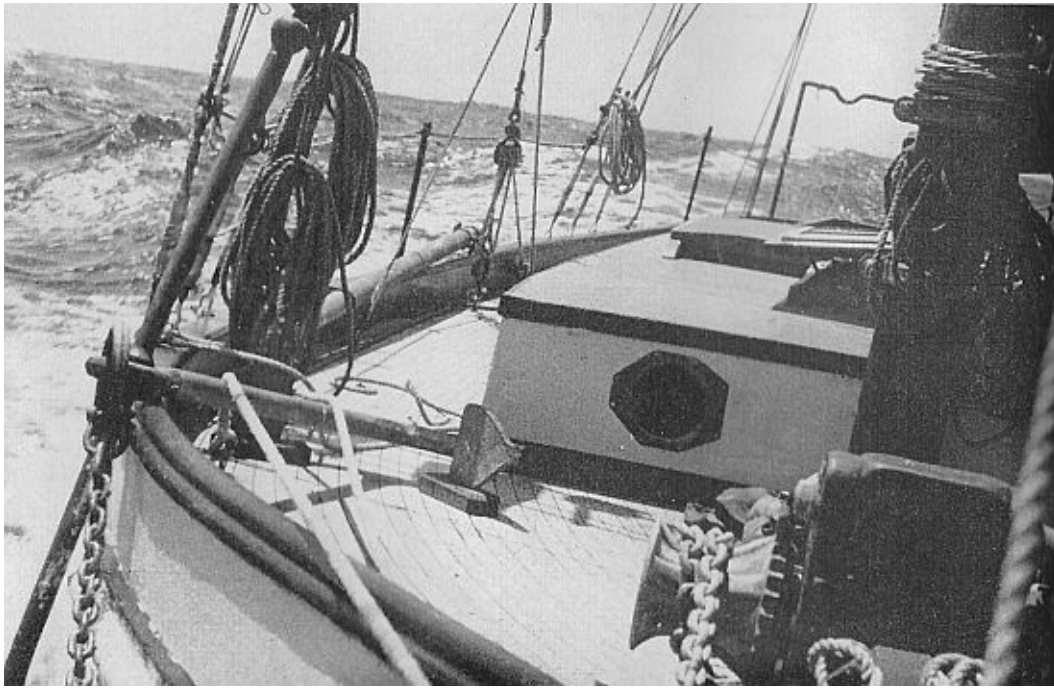
*Spearing dolphin that follow the ship when the bottom is foul.*



*Gerry learned navigation bringing the sun down on Iowa cornfields.*



*In the lee of Ua Huka. The mountains steal the rain from the trades but the windward side is lush green.*



*"The blue sea danced and spilled over in little whitecaps; the Hurricane, cheered by the wind, lay over and went to work, singing a six-knot tune."*

## Chapter III

**HIDDEN** somewhere in that unbroken wall of dense green to the northwest lay the entrance to the Escondido River. Slowly the ship moved across the deserted muddy lagoon. It was hot and dead calm. The noise of the engine, coughing salt water from the exhaust, was a discordant note against the soft murmur of the surf washing the outside of the spit. At half speed we felt our way toward the river mouth.

Gerry, forward with the sounding lead, called the depths in feet, “Seven . . . seven . . . six and a half! It looks better to starboard!”

Snags and rippings were hard by to port. Soft mud sucked at the keel, stopping our headway.

“Give her the gun!” I shouted.

We ploughed a muddy wake across the bar. Dense green mangroves with taller trees beyond moved in from both sides. Soundings increased to four fathoms. The river backed by the bar was deep and still. Astern, the quiet lagoon reflected the afternoon sunlight and mirrored great masses of cumulus clouds. The lowland to seaward dropped below the horizon and El Bluff stood isolated. On the mainland side the tops of the trees showed above the water like a fleet of small boats. The sky was hazy with heat. The jungle closed in around us and the noise of the engine echoed from the walls of a deep green canyon.

Just ahead where the river disappeared in the lush vegetation of the flooded lowlands lay for me the unknown. At sea the horizons were infinite and unchanging; life was centred within the confines of the ship. But here you could touch the horizon and it changed with each sweeping curve of the stream.

The land rose gradually and the trees finding more soil grew taller. Banana plants occasionally appeared in small clearings, their huge bright green leaves conspicuous against the darker jungle. Countless brilliant butterflies drifted across the river, like falling leaves from painted trees. A few small hills appeared, conical in shape, top-heavy with vegetation. The river twisted between



them like a brown snake over a carpet of mottled green. Shadows lengthened. The current increased and bits of driftwood and floating logs marking the centre made navigation impracticable in the fading light. We tied up to a steep bank just below the mouth of a little stream that tunnelled its way through a growth of bamboo.

With the engines cut off it was still as death. Flocks of bright green parrots flashed over the dark river, hurrying home for the night. With darkness, the insect world took charge. We were driven below to the superheated cabin and literally stewed in our juice all night listening to the cannonade of thunder echoing down the valley.

In the morning I struggled out of a wet sheet, feeling about as refreshed as one of Hector's dirty galley towels. Allen and Gerry were already on deck, sluicing each other down with deck buckets of cool water.

"Coppy," Gerry said, "the river came up in the night."

"Yes, and look at the current," pointed Allen.

A low, slate grey sky obscured the hilltops and not a breath of air stirred the mist over the river.

"Maybe the rain will drown some of the damn mosquitoes," I said lightly.

But those floating trees charging down the stream would bear watching, I thought, and ducked down below to see if I couldn't solve the mystery of how Hector could get so much grease to stay on top of a fried egg, defying all the laws of physics.

A few large raindrops hit the awning as we got under way, slowly increasing until a steady downpour hid the far bank. Allen, struggling into a waterproof jacket, said gloomily that specimens without gills were going to be hard to find. Slowly winding our way upstream, the current increased as the banks narrowed and more and more debris floated by.

In the afternoon we reached Rama, a little rain-soaked town of two hundred on a high bluff at the junction of the Rama and Escondido Rivers. We tied up for the night and entertained the Guardia Nacional, who in turn regaled us with horror stories of the bandit Sandino's reign of terror. Outside of robbing, murdering,

raping, and other delicacies, this gentleman had a rather consistent habit of cutting off the soles of prisoners' feet with a machete and making them walk home. The poor indigenous American, I mused, was still catching hell from the terrible heritage of Spain that had depraved a continent and a half. The bad blood still cropped up and, mixed with negroes and Indians, produced a very unwholesome citizen. It was a pity that Columbus did not sail for a less religious country; his heroic discovery of the West Indies was a death sentence on millions of unsuspecting natives.

In the morning the sun came out but the river was still rising slowly. I went ashore and acquired the services of a one-armed negro pilot to take us to the head of navigation on the Mico River.

A little above Rama we entered the Mico, a narrower but deeper river, flowing between high banks, boiling over sunken rocks and twisting around little islands. Thank God for the pilot! The engine was scarcely powerful enough to make good against the current, and it was often necessary to take bearings on the trees ashore to see if we were moving!

At Recreo there are impossible rapids. The town consists of a dozen thatched houses and one store with a tin roof. The pilot left us moored, bow and stern, to two huge trees in a black eddy out of the current. Allen and I went ashore to see about hiring dugout canoes. For a few cans of food, I made a deal with the Chinese owner of the only store for a large dugout and two Indians for guides.

Morning found us loading our outfit; mosquito bars and hammocks, guns, and ammunition, canned food for two weeks, photographic equipment and one change of clothes were all wrapped in a tarpaulin and stowed in the wet bottom of the dugout. We gave Hector pages of careful instructions on what not to do and pushed out into the stream above the white rapids. Dense clouds settled in the valley and the rains began. We waded, poled, and clawed our way over slippery rocks in a torrential downpour, often using ropes from the shore to haul the heavy dugout over a particularly bad stretch of foaming rapids. The country became rocky and mountainous, the vegetation more varied. There were millions of flowers everywhere; even in the treetops orchids bloomed. Little streams spanned by the gigantic roots of tall trees poured forth in sparkling cascades under a green network of ferns and vines. Everything dripped water.

Toward evening at the junction of a creek, we were unloaded with our soaked outfit on a bare rock at the foot of a very steep hill on top of which was a small thatched house in a tiny clearing, the only scar in the jungle since Recreo. Our two guides, promising to return in two weeks time, rushed back downstream, shooting the first rapids like a surfboard in a breaking sea. Wet, cold, and miserable, we crawled wearily up the hill to make camp. The habitation showed signs of life. A Mosquito Indian with his wife holding a year-old baby motioned us in out of the rain, poking up the fire to make us welcome. The shiny ends of tin cans, showing from under our tarpaulin, prompted his invitation for us to swing our hammocks in his *casa*. We accepted at once the prospects of dry clothes and food. His name, he told us, was Jose.

The worldly possessions of Jose and family were a few gourds, cooking pots, a knife, a machete, an ax, nearly an acre of bananas, a lemon tree, and several native avocado trees. A family of chickens lived under the same roof. Jose could neither read nor write, but he had that priceless possession of complete self-sufficiency. Rain or shine, the small patch of conquered jungle provided food and his family prospered.

The rain continued, hampering our work. All day we tramped through the hills for specimens, cutting our way through the dense underbrush on the slopes or floundering through the mud of the soaked valleys. At night we searched the swamps for rare frogs or sat quietly by a clearing waiting for a deer. Allen complained about the lack of snakes, but Gerry and I silently cheered this dearth of reptiles. The reputation of fer-de-lances and bushmasters kept me so much on the alert, ploughing through the dense tangle of vegetation, that I spotted many an inconspicuous lizard to augment the collection. As Allen had predicted, the rains were spoiling our work. Little animals caught in traps were eaten by ants, the birds that we had laboriously skinned out molded from the excess moisture. Even our collection of butterflies perished from mildew. It was impossible to keep anything dry.

In a week our food gave out and I stopped collecting to shoot for the cook pot. There were wild turkeys, called pavos, black and tough; but a beautiful game bird the size of a partridge, with a golden tail, was good to eat and easy to kill. Allen shot two monkeys for their skulls, but I rescued the corpses and cooked the meat, which was flavourless, stringy, and tough.

Day and night, great peals of thunder rolled down the valley and the rain came

down in torrents. The constant din of this deluge beating on the broad, thick leaves of tropical vegetation and the ever increasing roar of the river rising in flood was almost deafening. I was worried about the *Hurricane*, picturing Hector floating among the treetops. The food question was acute. We were reduced to boiled green bananas and bird soup. Collecting was becoming almost impossible and the scientist's brow was as stormy as the weather. Damn our civilized background, I thought, because without coffee or tea life was becoming a hardship; while Jose was enjoying the prosperity of game birds every day to supplement his regular diet of fruit.

The thrill of adventure in the Nicaraguan jungles was becoming a wet, cold, and dreary business. Harmony no longer reigned in camp and the scientist took to sulking in his hammock. Game around the clearing was becoming wary, and walking increasingly difficult. The little creek where we landed was no longer fordable. Huge trees undermined by the rushing waters floated downstream like monsters writhing in the current, their torn roots tentacles. Even Jose's perpetual smile was slowly washing away. One night in a terrific thunderstorm, when the wind tore branches from the trees and the lightning flashed in the jungle like an acetylene torch on hard steel, he warned us that the big flood was coming and we had better leave the next morning before the river, the only highway in this wilderness, became impassable; he would take us down in his dugout. Hurriedly we packed our belongings and huddled under the tarpaulin, nervously waiting for daylight.

Early morning found us in midstream with the jungle flashing by. The current was swirling against the tree trunks and the first rapids, where the river dropped out of sight in a rocky gorge, looked impassable. Boiling white water closed in from all sides; tense and still we sat holding on to the sides of the canoe; an accident in that current might be fatal. Jose was an expert and his eyes never wavered from the water just ahead during that mad race downstream. Landmarks looked strangely unfamiliar. As we shot around the last bend, the village of Recreo, ten days ago situated on a hill, was on the water's edge.

With relief I saw the tall spars of the *Hurricane* above the jungle. The river had risen over twenty feet and our bow and stern lines, tied in the high branches, were now stretched under water. In a strong back eddy, the ship surged back and forth among the tree-tops. Hector was worried and told us he had spent many a sleepless night keeping the rigging from tangling with the branches.

Next morning the rain ceased, but the river was still rising and I longed for the sea. If we ever get out of the woods we'll stay in salt water, I decided; and there was no time to lose. I sent Hector overboard to loosen the lines and Allen started the motor. The shrouds stripped the leaves of the branches as the strong current caught the bow and headed the ship downstream. Fifteen knots the land rushed by. It was not long before the town of Rama and slacker water was reached.

Between the high banks, stretched over uprights of old rails, a telephone wire connected this jungle outpost with the sea. I wondered about the clearance. The local bank sitters agreed to a man that there was plenty. Rapidly nearing the wire, I glanced aloft and saw we would not make it by a good many feet. I sent Allen below to run the engine full speed and I put the helm hard over. The current swept us on through sideways and the wire, stretching an incredible distance, snapped. The enraged operator, cut off from a conversation with Bluefields, ran shouting and gesticulating to the bank. We swung slowly back upstream and tied up. The Guardia Nacional rushed to the scene and, after much consultation, agreed to let us off for fifteen dollars; but there wasn't fifteen cents in cash among all hands. I told them we would fix it ourselves and they reluctantly agreed.

With a coil of rope and tools from the ship, we rowed across the river, picking up the wire as we went. Hector, armed with a machete, jumped out first and, scrambling up the bank in waist-high grass, ran into a huge fer-de-lance with a bad disposition. The snake struck without warning. Hector knocked it off with his machete, beating it senseless with the flat of the blade. With the gleam of battle in his eyes, he was about to give the snake the death of a thousand cuts when Allen rushed up shouting, "Stop! . . . Stop! For God's sake don't damage the skull!"

Hector spent his wrath by making wild passes in the air with his weapon. Gingerly, I scraped the snake up with an oar and agreed to take the "valuable specimen" aboard. With the dinghy in midstream, the reptile came to life, opened his mouth to 180 degrees and thrust out two curved, milk-white hypodermic needles an inch long, and lunged forward. I leapt backwards. Luckily, this seven feet of destruction was slowed down by a broken back. A live fer-de-lance in a ten-foot dinghy in a crocodile infested river was too heroic a role for me, even in the name of science. I stood up on the seat, pounded the snake with an oar, amid shrieks of protest from Allen about not

damaging the skull, and gradually changed the shape of this now very active and writhing reptile from round to flat until the large head dripped blood and poison like pus from a septic wound. Enough snake hunting for me, I thought, pulling back across the river. Thank God, there were no snakes in the South Seas.

After a three-hour delay, we restored communications again and started once more for the sea. The current swept us around the bends, taking complete charge of the ship and often driving her into the jungle where the rigging would tangle with the trees, and Hector was sent aloft to the main crosstrees with a machete to hack desperately at the branches to clear the shrouds. Soon the river widened and it was less work keeping the *Hurricane* out of the woods. Sunlight streamed through the clouds, brightening the landscape for the first time in fourteen days. In the flatter country, the flood stage had passed and the river was below the highwater mark. At dark, only a few hours from the sea, we tied up in front of a large banana plantation and, dead tired, all hands slept soundly.

In the morning I awakened with the peculiar sensation that the forces of gravity were amiss. Rather than being pulled down on the bunk, I was being forced feet first against the bulkhead. I rolled out of bed and found that it was necessary to stand at a forty-five-degree angle to keep from falling. A tangled green was framed by the port light. Crawling up the steep cabin floor, I made the companionway. The branches of a tree scratched my face and I shouted in alarm. All hands jumped out of their bunks, scrambled around on the cabin floor, regained their balance, and came on deck. We were high and dry on a very steep muddy bank, nestled securely in the bush. The river had dropped at least seven feet and flowed only under the counter. With a dozen plantation labourers, we dug out the bank and pushed on the bowsprit. The ship launched herself and, plunging into the river, fetched up hard on the kedge anchor. I paid off the help with canned food, breathed a sigh of relief, and headed down a quieter stream. Luckily, the *Hurricane*, born in the bayous, knew her way around the bush.

Off El Bluff again, we washed the mud off the deck and top-sides, dried the sails in the fresh breeze and revelled in the sunshine. Gerry and I went ashore on the theory that nothing tasted better than the first bottle of cold beer. Allen joined us later and we discussed our future plans. It would take several months to complete the Nicaraguan collection; and with most of the world ahead of us, I did not think it advisable to spend the time.

I knew Gerry was as anxious as I to get into the Pacific. Allen expressed his desire to stay in the bush with the animals, and we readily agreed. The collection was stored in the customs warehouse and Allen moved across to Bluefields. After a celebration on the Fourth of July, which it is the patriotic duty of all Americans to emblaze in foreign lands, we left Allen sad but sober on the after deck of a river boat to face the jungle alone.

Back aboard, we were making ready for sea when a United Fruit steamer came alongside the jetty. I told Gerry we should pull over and pay our respects to the captain and suggest that a piece of ice and a little refrigerated Iowa cow would be as welcome as mail from home. The skipper, true to form, was an agreeable person, granted our requests, mixed a drink and toasted the voyage.

All hands lined up on the wharf to see us off. Just as Gerry was pulling away, a large, fat, and very black negro woman came running down the wharf with several yards of blue calico held aloft to give her more speed and shouting at the top of her voice, "No pago! No pago nada!" A torrent of very profane Spanish left her breathless and she pointed an accusing finger at the *Hurricane* lying serenely at anchor. I gathered in the following incoherent explanation that Hector owed her one cordoba. I paid off and the crowd began to laugh, suspecting Gerry or me as the guilty party. Our hand would bear watching in the future, I told Gerry as we pulled out to the ship. I could feel my fingers around Hector's throat as I tried to remember enough Spanish to explain to the little devil that his iniquity bills weren't to be charged to me or the ship's operations account.

## Chapter IV

**IN APPROACHING** the Panama Canal, there is never a doubt about your navigation. All the heavenly bodies may lurk behind the clouds, but the range lights on the steamers from the shipping lanes of the western world converging on the vertex mark the way to Limon Bay. Like a Cyclops, the huge red eye of a Norwegian passing close to starboard glares at a cold green eye from Calais ploughing a phosphorescent wake to port.

We were anxious to be in civilization again. Aeroplanes circled overhead as we slipped between the breakwaters off Colon. Sailing easily in the smooth water, we were boarded by the port authorities in fast trim launches. While still underway, the necessary forms were filled out, we were granted pratique and told where to anchor. This efficiency, courtesy, and nearness was a pleasant contrast with Central America. Although there is a certain relaxation in “the land of *manana*,” it was a relief to have things done properly again.

Our berth was just off the coaling dock in front of the government owned town of Cristobal, which includes the machine shops, the concrete piers and warehouses, and the residences of the canal employees. Beyond Cristobal, across the railway tracks, the Panamanian town of Colon lies scattered from the bay to the jungle. The main streets, like Singapore, are lined with Chinese and Indian shops displaying merchandise from all over the world; but the side streets and alleys are mostly faced with saloons and night clubs for army and navy patronage, as well as tourist trade. One square of the town is devoted to prostitution on all four sides. Many races and colours are on display in front of tiny one-room apartments around this exchange, most of them as alluring as an octopus in the entrance of a grotto.

Entertainment is not expensive in Colon if you are willing to frequent the less pretentious places where for ten cents a drink you can watch sailors of many nationalities fruitlessly flirt with Spanish-speaking barmaids, and the military police round up the army of occupation for taps at their base in Coco Solo. For considerably more money at the more respectable clubs, you can watch stuffed shirts sipping champagne and ogling a strip dancer under a halo of cigar smoke. Whenever Gerry and I managed to warp into shoes and remove most of the



Stockholm tar and deck paint from our hands, we preferred a street called “Bottle Alley,” where most of the old timers gathered and entertained us with stories of the early days of the digging of the “big ditch.”

But most of our time in Panama was spent aboard the boat. There was plenty of work to be done making ready for the long haul across the Pacific. Supplies were cheap at the government-owned warehouses and I bought extra rope, canvas, and a variety of miscellaneous equipment. The fuel tanks and the water tanks were filled and all the available storage space under the bunks was crammed full of food. I overhauled the rigging while Gerry and Hector made baggy-wrinkles for chafing gear and painted the deck and topsides. Just six weeks after anchoring, we were ready to transit the Canal in a ship that was better than new.

Hector, raised in the bush, was so entranced by the mechanical magic around him that he shamefully neglected his ship’s duties. On seeing his first submarine he asked me what it was. I explained as best I could about the working of the undersea craft; Hector shook his head and told me it was a “fantasia.” No traveller can avoid being impressed with the efficiency of the Panama Canal. Totally devoid of confusion, great ships are gently lifted out of the Atlantic, piloted across a submerged jungle, Gatun Lake, then they are noiselessly lowered and slip out into the Pacific Ocean a few hours later.

At six o’clock one September morning our appointed pilot came aboard. There was no reverse gear on the *Hurricane* and the clutch had frozen. I did not confess this until we were underway in the wake of a Dollar liner, headed for the first lock. I could see that a Canal pilot did not like the job of taking a seventeen-gross-ton boat through the world’s biggest ditch, and when I broke the news about the clutch, he roared, “How the hell do you stop her?”

I told him I would kill the engine far enough in advance so she would coast to a stop and crank it up again when he wanted to go ahead. In the first lock we tied alongside the slippery concrete wall behind the Dollar liner, which was held in the centre by lines from either side. The huge gates closed and, as the water boiled in from beneath, the ship surged against the lines and smashed back against the wall. Coils of old rope for fenders took most of the shock and chafe as we slowly rose out of our concrete tomb to the top level of the lock.

The pilot used me for the clutch and I was continually starting and stopping the tractor engine. So the mysteries and mechanical magnitude of the Canal were

overshadowed by that stubborn twenty-horsepower contraption that I constantly wound up in the equatorial heat. It was a relief to emerge from the last lock going up and sail out across Gatun Lake in a cool breeze. The shores were thick jungle, and dead trees like old dock pilings stood up on the shoals; channel markers and ranges were the only sign of civilization in this flooded valley.

Going downhill from the lake to the Pacific was much easier. There was no surging. The water gently subsided in the locks, and the ship settled quietly down alongside the wall until we looked like a toy sailboat in the bottom of a drained swimming pool. In the middle of the afternoon, the pilot left us moored to a buoy in Balboa's inner harbour. The Pacific at last! The Canal transit took us just nine and one-half hours, cost only four dollars and fifty cents on the basis of seventy-five cents per net ton, including the services of our friend the pilot.

Anxious to be off after too long in port, we attended to a few last-minute details, bought fresh stores, hauled the ship up on the beach at high water and, when the sixteen-foot tide receded, scraped the bottom clean and added a coat of red copper paint. On the morning of September twenty-third, we sailed out of Balboa and into the Gulf of Panama. Ahead of us lay almost eight thousand miles of Pacific Ocean; but, a little less than a thousand miles due southwest, the Galapagos Islands straddled the Equator. It was one of those brilliant tropical days just after a rain, when everything sparkles; a moderate fair wind pushed us along about five knots. Once in the Galapagos we would encounter the trades, until then anything could happen.

I brought up "South American Pilot, Vol. Ill," and under the caption "Directions for Gulf of Panama—Outward Bound," I read the following: "The great difficulty, however, is the passage out from Panama Bay. Pizarro, the first to attempt this, in November, 1525, after beating about for seventy days, was forced to return to the Rio Chiman. . . . The passage to the westward during the rainy season is a most tedious affair; calms, squalls, contrary winds and currents, a heavy swell, and extreme heat, as well as an atmosphere laden with moisture and rain, are the daily accompaniments. It often occurs that twenty miles of westing are not made in a week, and it is only by the industrious use of every squall and slant of wind that the passage can be made."

Gerry said that we had plenty of food and water and nothing but time on our hands. It wasn't long until our fair wind died, and after a few hours' calm it blew hard from the southwest with plenty of rain. We started beating about like poor

Pizarro four hundred years ago when he established the all-time low of seventy days for zero miles. The weather was really perverse and every time I brought the ship about we would shout, "By the industrious use of every squall," and trim the big jib flat.

## Chapter V

**LAND HO!** Pinta Island, most northerly of the Galapagos, loomed ahead through a haze. Eager to smell the land, we quietly damned the dying breeze. For twenty-two days we had worked the ship to windward; inched our way south off the low coast of Colombia in calms and squalls until a latitude shot of the moon showed us one degree north of the Line; then off to the westward, close hauled in a light wind, we entered the Great Humboldt Current, sweeping up from beyond Cape Horn, cooled by Antarctic ice and tempering the equatorial heat so that coats, sweaters and hot coffee made tolerable the long night watch. For six days on this same tack we never touched the helm or slacked a sheet, so fell into the lazy routine of eating and sleeping or watching the ship trace a pattern of white lace over the dark blue. The second week at sea we shaved off all our hair, and our beards were longer than our bristling scalps. Our skin, burned deep brown by the sun, was streaked white with crusted salt. Like convicts escaped from Devils Island, we lined the rail and stared, fascinated by the strange land.

But Pinta Island was not coming any closer, for the cold current was setting us off to the northwest. By late afternoon the wind was dead and poor Hector had tears in his eyes as he watched the land fade back into the haze and disappear in the failing light. No wonder the early navigators called the Galapagos the “Enchanted Isles”; for currents uncertain in strength or direction run through the archipelago and many an old sailing vessel, sighting the islands one day, would lose them the next. After fruitless searching for days, they would be forced to return to the mainland of America and report that the islands were a mirage.

Land hungry, I went below and started the engine, steering due south to get out of the current in the lee of the islands. The warmth of the motor was welcome, and the night watch often slipped below to warm his feet close to the manifold. After midnight a light breeze sprang up and I shut off the motor. Great Albemarle, largest of the group, rose ahead in the night like a black wall. A dense fog drifted in, hiding the land, and we ghosted along in a void; the hollow boom of surf breaking under the cliffs warned us off shore.

After daylight, the morning sun burned through the mist, revealing a monument to chaos. Close by was a land arrested in the making; brick-red cinder heaps and

dark cascades of frozen lava rose from a shore line scalloped by the surf to the sky where the cone tops of craters, five thousand feet above the sea, were shrouded in the mystery of perpetual clouds. Gerry and I could not avoid an unearthly feeling, as if we had sailed off the rim of the horizon.

Shivering in a heavy wool sweater, Gerry said, "If that conglomeration starts smoking, it would really look like hell."

I agreed and added, "If it lights up at night, I'll bring the ship about and sail back to earth again."

The sun warmed our stiff knuckles; seals dived ahead of the ship and sea lions, hauled out on rocky ledges under the towering cliffs, raised their heads as we sailed along the coast in deep smooth water. Pelicans, gannets, boobies, terns, and gulls flew from the tops of whitewashed crags and circled overhead. The tell-tale knot zipped out of the troll line and Hector, shrieking with delight, landed a twenty-pound tuna. This promised relief from canned corn beef made the islands look more friendly.

In the late afternoon, half-way down Albemarle's eighty-mile west coast, we made the anchorage at Tagus Cove, an extinct crater where the sea had slipped in over a broken part of the rim, a smooth and safe harbour in any weather, for the entrance was protected by an off-lying island, Fernandina, a great dead volcano over four thousand feet high, utterly desolate and barren. The chain clattered out through the hawse pipe and the ship, fetching up on the anchor, came to rest after twenty-three days of contrary winds. She had sailed seventeen hundred miles to make good the nine-hundred-and-sixty-mile direct course. Responsibility fell from my shoulders, and Gerry smiled contentedly at the prospect of spending his four-hour night watch sleeping below in a motionless bunk. We launched the dinghy and rowed ashore, anxious to explore before dark. Hector, relieved from the monotony of washing and watching, rigged handlines and, shouting and dancing with excitement, began pulling in fish as fast as he could work his arms.

At the head of the cove, a slightly eroded ravine in the steep crater's wall affords the only possible landing place. A huge sea lion sun-bathing at the mouth of the ravine, momentarily disputing our landing, graciously launched himself, and we jumped out on a low rock ledge. From the head of the gulch, we climbed over sharp rocks and loose shale to the rim of the crater. Working farther inland, we

scrambled up a small mountain of lava where we could see all around before stopping for breath. After staring at a few hundred miles of nothing, Gerry said that such naked topography was really indecent; and, if there was only a respectable tree, a soft contour, or a sign of fresh water, it wouldn't be so bad. Skidding back down over the parched slag, I looked seaward where the blue was lost in a hazy horizon; westward, over three thousand miles, the South Pacific reached the nearest land and looked more inviting than the desolate waste heaped around us. The *Hurricane*, a white dot on the dark water of Tagus Cove, was life! There was no other escape from this uninhabited coast and the inevitable death from thirst would come quickly. The security of the ship would be welcome, and we raced down to the landing in the last half-hour of daylight. Aboard, Hector was singing softly in deep contentment, his hands were cut and bleeding, but on the deck lay seventy beautiful fish. He had found his Mayan heaven in this lonely cove.

In the morning we salted down cut strips of boneless fish, threw the carcasses to the sharks, and made ready for sea. Gerry was anxious to be off for Tahiti where there was something green. I told him that once he was there he would probably be more interested in something brown, if the stories I had heard about the Paris of Polynesia were true. Hector was reluctant to leave a place where the volume of fish almost equalled the volume of water in the harbour. I compromised by sailing for the smaller but habitable island of Floriana, a hundred miles to windward.

Three days we slopped along in the light southeast breeze before anchoring in Post Office Bay on the north side of Floriana. This, we agreed, looked better. The hilltops were green, the contours well rounded, and the shore of the bay curved in a fine sand beach backed with dense low leafless bush. Slopes rose gently inland. Hector began fishing as soon as the anchor hit the bottom, never realizing when we left the ship to go ashore.

We pulled the dinghy out on the sand near a deserted board shack where a dry water tank rusted under the eaves. Farther down the beach a barrel on a post gave the bay its name. Fishing boat or yachts dropped mail there to be picked up in a month or a year by the next visitor, reviving an old custom established by whalers who called after the large tortoises and left letters to be sent on homeward-bound vessels.

Away from the water and out of the breeze it was hot. A well-defined trail led

inland and we followed it over old lava flows through barren gray bush that gradually changed to yellow green as we gained altitude. Lizards streaked across the dusty path and countless birds, tame as pet canaries, decorated the grotesque growth like brightly coloured flowers. After climbing less than two hours, the trail wound between two hills and the vegetation was lush green, the soil under foot moist, the air fresh and cool. We were about a thousand feet above sea level and had entered the rain belt. The valley broadened and wild orange and lemon trees appeared on both sides of the trail. This, I thought, was really worth the walk. Indolently, we stretched out on the thick green grass and sucked the seedling oranges. It was sweet and good, this first taste of fresh fruit in over a month! Satiated, our lips tingling from the citric acid, we continued leisurely along the path.

Unexpectedly, a small house, nestled against a rock cliff, showed through a profusion of tropical growth. Blending perfectly with the landscape, this low dwelling was scarcely visible among the broad-leafed bananas and the tail-stalked papayas. Banks of nasturtiums were neatly terraced on either side of a narrow walk. I shouted. The only response was a loud bray from a tethered donkey. Tired from a long walk, we sat down under an orange tree and waited. Suddenly a crashing in the bush startled us to our feet. A large German police dog emerged and bounded toward us, greeting us like long-lost brothers. Barking and whining, he nudged us with his muzzle, then raced towards the house. We followed the dog around to the back door. His master had returned. A smiling, middle-aged German, substantially built, with thick glasses, stood in front of the low entrance, shook his head at our greeting in English and motioned us inside. Conversation was limited to a German-English dictionary, pencil sketches, and a very few words of Spanish. We learned that his name was Herr Witmer. He and his fifteen-year-old son were the only human beings on the island. His wife with an eighteen-month-old baby had gone to Germany for a visit.

On the way up we had seen signs of wild cattle and hogs. I wanted to go hunting, but to express our desire for fresh meat was not easy. Finally, I aimed my gun at Gerry, who crawled around the floor on his hands and knees, grunting like a pig. Witmer laughed and said, "Yah. . . . Yah! Peeg shyten," and pointed to his dog, who understood and barked furiously at the prospect of a hunt. Promising to return in the morning, we hurried away and reached the beach by dark.

Early next day we moved the *Hurricane* to another anchorage, Blackwater

Beach, on the west side of the island, in order to shorten the walk to the German's. This got us off to a late start, so we hurried up the new path, armed with both shotgun and rifle. In less than an hour we reached an oasis on the semi-arid slopes, the broken-down establishment of the late Dr. Ritter, who had died under mysterious circumstances a year ago. Dr. Ritter and a woman were the first German settlers on the island, and their effort to find Utopia created considerable publicity at the time. A simple wooden cross stuck in a pile of rock marked the end of his attempt. His wife fled back to Germany.

Above Ritter's the trail, less distinct, branched out in many directions and became smaller and smaller until the branches of the thorny bush closed in, blocking our way. We had been following cattle runs and were lost on an island only twenty-seven miles in circumference. Fog settled down and a fight rain soaked us through. Shivering in the highlands, we argued the direction of the main trail, tried to retrace our steps, but each path eventually disappeared under impenetrable thickets. Tall rangy cattle with huge horns crashed through the bush ahead of us. Desperately we worked downhill in the general direction of salt water. One huge bull, blocking our path, watched us with lowered head. We made a wide detour around him and I held the rifle in readiness. Just before dark, we luckily stumbled on the main trail from Ritter's place to the sea. Relieved, we ran down to the beach. The anchor light, nodding to the easy ground swell, was a welcome sight. Tomorrow, I thought, feeling my scratched and bleeding arms, we will get an early start. Gerry whistled for the dinghy.

In the morning we took Hector with us, stayed on the trail, and all hands arrived at Herr Witmer's in due time. Witmer picked up his gun and we started out at once with the dog on a leash. Winding through a wild orange thicket, we emerged at the edge of a large grassy plain. Witmer grunted his satisfaction; at the far end of the plain were a dozen black spots. The dog, scarcely able to suppress his excitement, strained against his leash whining. Under concealment of the low bush, we advanced cautiously until within range. From a kneeling position, I took aim and fired; but all the hogs streaked for the shelter of the bush. The dog, released, brought the whole lot at bay. Witmer fired and one hog dropped. I fired at the retreating herd and missed again, but Witmer dropped another stone dead. The score was two to nothing in favour of the home team. I realized, as the German looked disapprovingly at my rifle, that I had committed the major Galapagos sin. In a land where a single cartridge may mean the difference between life or death, a bad shot is intolerably bad business. Leaving us to clean the kill, Witmer went after his donkey, and Hector, with fiendish glee,



started to work on the pigs with his eight-inch razor-sharp knife.

Loading the carcasses on the donkey, we started the long trek to the beach. On the way we gathered a sack of oranges and Witmer gave us an assortment of vegetables, fresh from his garden, and a sack of avocados. Mexicans and donkeys are as natural together as whisky and soda. Hector, with the halter rope over one shoulder and my rifle over the other, led the way down the trail, singing at the top of his voice a Mexican version of a Mayan Indian love song. At Ritter's place the donkey was given an additional load, a large bunch of green bananas, and promptly went on a sit-down strike. Teutonic wrath or Mexican profanity had no more effect than blows or kicks. Reluctantly, all hands shared the burden of the beast and staggered to the dinghy, pulled out on the sand.

Witmer came aboard to spend the night and gave us a hand butchering the hogs by the light of the pressure lantern. Most of the meat was salted down, but choice ribs and two hams were saved for cooking fresh. For dinner I prepared our largest pot full of spareribs and canned sauerkraut. Witmer, in spite of the advantages of nationality and cargo space, conceded first place to Gerry for consumption. On deck after dinner we played Wagner on the victrola and talked to Witmer as best we could about his life on the island.

He told us he was contented with his existence and would perhaps never return to civilization. Out of dense wilderness he had carved a home; with only an axe and crude homemade materials, he had cleared the land and planted the seeds he had brought with him. Now—only three years since a schooner from Ecuador had left him, his wife, and young son on the inhospitable shore of Floriana—a garden with corn, onions, radishes, tomatoes, potatoes, sugar cane, coffee, and even tobacco, flourished in place of a desolate waste of thorny bush. A tiny stream of fresh water trickled from the rocks in back of his home. A smoke house for curing meat leaned against the face of a cliff. He tanned his own leather and made shoes for his family, cured his tobacco, pressed his sugar cane, and roasted and ground the green coffee. He had caught and tamed a wild donkey, and built strong fences around his domain for protection against the wild cattle and hogs. His eyes behind thick glasses were kindly but resolute. In perfect physical condition, powerfully built, Witmer is a character not easily forgotten. He had succeeded, where most fail, in accomplishing his dream and was living in his own little Utopia.

Fantastic shadows moved across the deck from the gently swinging anchor light.

A light breeze came off the land, smelling of dust and bringing the soft murmur of surf within the circle of light. I wondered just how much of a disturbing element this brief contact with the outside world was to an educated, cultured man, five thousand miles from home and friends. Closely watching his face for a sign of longing, I saw only the peace and contentment of one who had found himself in isolation, creative physical work, and complete independence. I knew he would never go back, particularly to the regimented Germany of today. For years he had never heard the word, nor read the painted sign, "Verboten." I hoped he never would. A free soul in the misty Galapagos highlands, he had won his great battle and made the stubborn volcanic earth yield him the necessities of life.

The pirates of two hundred years ago had left cattle, pigs, goats, and donkeys to establish a base of supplies and a refuge when preying on the shipping and coastal towns of South America. Whalers, a century later, planted oranges and lemons. Dogs, probably sailors' pets, had been left behind. In the last few years man had attempted to colonize the island. The animals adapted themselves rapidly to survive. The cattle grew tall and fleet with long sharp horns; pigs changed to lean razor-backed hogs with huge curved tusks; dogs evolved from harmless pets to powerfully built, heavy jawed, wolf-like creatures, and again hunted in packs like their ancestors of long ago. The law of nature never discriminates, and man had not fared so well; every attempt at colonization had failed, many died, some were driven off by loneliness and others were killed by their neighbours. Only Witmer had survived and his family had found peace. The islands were no longer a mystery to him and nature no longer harsh. He had found the secret, and that secret lay within himself.

In the morning Hector rowed Witmer and his dog ashore. His last and only request was that we write him a letter when we reached Tahiti so he would know we were safe. Before the trail entered the bush, he stood for a moment, raised his arm in farewell salute, turned and strode rapidly out of sight. Thoughtlessly, we never wrote that promised letter. Three years later I received a letter at my home address, in German, from Witmer. He still wondered about our safety, but never mentioned his own life.

Clouds, rolling over the mountain tops from the south-east, heralded the trades. I was anxious to be off. Only a few more days remained in October and our schedule was Tahiti by Christmas, but Tahiti was almost four thousand miles down wind. First we needed more salt to preserve the pork, and salt was

one thing the arid lowlands could provide. We moved the ship around to our first anchorage at Post Office Bay.

Back from the beach were ponds fringed with white crusted salt. Pink flamingos trimmed with black nested there and laid their huge pink-yolked eggs on tiny rocky islets. Ducks, fat as butter, floated on the salt saturated lake. Near the ship a ledge of coral in shoal water provided lobsters. Ashore, we built a huge fire and barbecued two hams and all the ribs we could eat. We shot ducks, caught lobsters, and gathered a sack of coarse salt crystals. Gerry spent one afternoon before the oven, cookbook in hand, and turned out hot cinnamon rolls, pies and biscuits.

Our last day in the Galapagos, I printed the following menu and tacked it up in the galley:

*Breakfast*

Fresh orange juice	Fried strips of fish
Pancakes	Coffee

*Lunch*

Fresh vegetable soup stewed with pork  
Barbecued ham with baked potatoes  
Radishes   Cinnamon rolls and hot chocolate

*Dinner*

Fresh lobster cocktail
Broiled Galapagos Island duck
Hot corn bread      Orange marmalade

We were learning that a successful cruise revolves around the stomach. Winds and weather, rigging and sails, or nautical knowledge and navigation are secondary in promoting harmony aboard. Look to the galley and trust to God for the weather!

## Chapter VI

**TAHITI** for Christmas and mail from home,” was the chantey that brought the anchor on deck. The jib rattled up the headstay, filled with the fight offshore breeze, nosed the ship around and we pointed for a blank horizon. The lazy south-east filled the mainsail and the mizzen fluttering up the mast curved to the wind and slowly pulled out the sheet through creaking blocks.

Floriania grew small astern and later huge Albemarle, like a sunset cloud, loomed up to the starboard with its great dead volcanoes piercing the sky. Three thousand miles to the west and four hundred south, the Marquesas Islands, nearest land to leeward, dotted the map. We would cut a path just thirteen feet and nine inches across this ocean, like a meteor wandering through the solar system. By late afternoon those geological monstrosities, the Galapagos, dropped below the sea and we were utterly alone.

Green bananas lashed to the rigging, strips of drying fish hanging like pendants from the shrouds, the cockpit filled with oranges and lemons, and the two cooked hams swinging easily from the carlings in the galley contributed a feeling of prosperity. The wilderness had provided and we were surrounded with wealth; but in cash there was only one American dollar, salvaged from our orgy of supply buying in Panama, which, Gerry said, we should keep for seed.

One degree south of the Line, the sun plunged below the well-ordered ranks of trade wind clouds, with Venus an hour behind, brilliant in the short twilight. After dark the breeze freshened a little. I turned on the binnacle light and held her on west-southwest. Below, Hector was noisy with the pots and pans, and his shadow darted across the bulkhead in the soft yellow light of the swinging cabin lamp. There was not enough wind to make white on the water and there was no moon, but all the stars were bright and Orion sprawled across the sky. Beyond the gunwales, the ocean was invisible; but I could hear the rippling of the bow wave and the slight gurgling of the wake under the counter, and feel the easy lift of the stem as the gentle sea of low latitudes passed under the ship. Two thousand fathoms of blue-black water slept quietly, breathing in long slow swells.

Gerry came up to take his watch and silently sat beside me in the cockpit. I felt the pleasant warmth of companionship after darkness had accentuated the loneliness of the vast Pacific. No lookout was necessary on this trackless sterile waste; squalls or storms as well as calms are almost unknown. The twenty-four-hour day was divided into single rotating watches: four hours each by day; from six to nine p.m. the dogwatch with one hour apiece; and, from nine p.m. to six a.m., each man had six hours uninterrupted sleep, and three hours at the wheel fighting sleep. The watches were changed every third day.

It was all downhill before the great wind system of the southern world. From the doldrums near the Equator to the variables at thirty degrees south latitude, the trades blow between east and south throughout this fifteen-hundred-mile belt around the globe; the southern world is water, only two continents, Africa and South America, thrust their capes below the line. All other land (except Antarctica) is islands, from Australia, large as the United States, to dots awash by the surf. The world of men is small and of little consequence south of the Line. Only a handful of people live isolated on these islands and the distances between them are incredible. From Africa, the trades, uninterrupted across the South Atlantic, gather moisture, drench the eastern part of South America, rise over the Andes and, relieved of all their moisture on the windward slopes, rush down to the Pacific and start the tiny ripple off the arid western coast that eventually builds up to the huge long seas that crash up on the great barrier reef of Australia. Carrying dust from the largest island's western desert across the Indian Ocean, the trades bring cooler weather and rain on the African coast, from Madagascar's southern tip to Mombasa, north of Zanzibar; interrupted only by the seasonal monsoon from the continent of Asia that reverses the wind south of the Line through the East Indies and New Guinea, as far east as the Solomon Islands. South of the variables, south of forty degrees, the westerlies blow with violence the year around and raise the great Antarctic sea that sweeps around the landless part of the world. Only Cape Horn thrusts its rocky headlands into the tempest. Modified, these same seas come against the trades to crash on the leeward shore of the South Sea Islands two thousand miles from their source, the winter gales of Antarctica.

The first week at sea in the changeless weather, we watched the sun come up astern and set over the bow. Even the clouds were the same, with their white fluffy tops over a straight darker line, marching in uniform procession across the sky, hurrying ahead of the sun. The only variant was the phases of the moon, and we eagerly watched that sickle of light fill out and grow rounder each night until

the dead full moon extended the horizon line miles beyond the gunwales. The weather was light, too light. Often it was hardly possible to feel the wind on your face and the sea was incredibly smooth. We nervously chafed at the delay, whistled and prayed for wind. I thought that the broad stern of the ship pointing to windward, with the name *Hurricane* in bold raised letters arched across, would bring something more out of the east than the gentle zephyrs that rolled us so slowly along. The sun was hot and we rigged an awning over the helmsman. Off watch we huddled in the small lines of midday shade or doused ourselves with buckets of warm sea water and were refreshed by the evaporation. In the late afternoon and early morning the long shadows of the sails blanketed the ship and it was pleasantly cool. At night the thermometer stood regularly at seventy-two degrees.

Hector cried for land and repeatedly asked me how soon he could go aloft and have a look. Carefully, I brought out the charts and explained the distances but they were beyond his conception. On the tenth day at sea, he spent several hours on the main crosstrees, scanning the horizon ahead for land. Each day he grew more depressed as we sailed beyond this scope of imagination.

Gerry and I learned our lesson after that first week when only six hundred miles were subtracted from the three-thousand-two-hundred-mile course. The wind was a little more aft; we set the square sail, took in the main, rigged our big awning between the spars, dragged two mattresses on deck and read or slept when not on watch. For seventeen days we never touched a sheet or trimmed a sail and the helm required little attention. At night we would leave the wheel awhile and walk around the deck to keep awake. "Just watch every now and then and keep the compass card swinging between west and west sou'west," I told Gerry. Hector received no concessions because, with full time on the wheel, he managed to wander off the course as much as four points each way; also, I suspected him of sleeping on night watch. I was planning to lay a trap to catch him in the arms of Morpheus; but one night when I had the twelve to three watch, I was awakened by Hector in the cool pink dawn. The ship had worked around far enough to windward to back the square sail and was sliding down the slopes stem first in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean. A most unseamanlike predicament; dangerous in heavy weather, but ridiculous in that feeble breeze. A wisp of cloud winked at the laughing sun. The skipper was caught one hundred and eighty degrees off the course by the one and only paid hand.

Gerry came out on deck, rubbed sleep out of his eyes, and said, “What’s the trouble, Coppy; are you tryin’ her backwards?”

The mizzen was lowered and the jib set before she would wear around. Hector, having witnessed the downfall of his lord and master, came out of his depression and was a better and happier hand the remainder of the passage.

Fourteen days out and the half-way mark was many miles ahead. Never a ship or a sail or a thread of smoke was seen to vary the day. I no longer had the sensation of travelling, but a feeling of living an isolated life on an island forty-five feet long. Time had ceased. There was less interest in the day’s run. Our ambition became simple and elementary. The complexities of life had all but vanished and we lived for the sensations of the moment. At night, before fading into sleep, while the spot of light from the moon through the skylight circled around the cabin with the slow weaving of the ship running free in a regular sea, I thought of the heaven of green lulls, valleys and cool fresh-water streams; the ordinary ways of life ashore became the greatest luxuries.

Life was an endless procession of days and nights. Our fresh food was a thing of the past; salt pork, salt fish, canned beef and salmon with rice, canned fruit and vegetables, pilot biscuits and preserves made up the daily fare. Occasionally, Gerry or I made an eggless cake or baked pies and biscuits. A good variety, but a diet that nevertheless palled; we longed for fresh meat or green vegetables. Hector received regular lessons in English and we gradually converted him to gringo ideas of sanitation. He regularly washed his hands at least once a day, rigged a cleaner from a wire nail, and his hands no longer terminated in black half moons.

One day, just ahead of the ship, a column of steam shot out of the water like a miniature submarine volcano. I shouted in excitement, pointing a blank ocean to Gerry and Hector. In a few minutes, close by, two, three, then four fountains of fine mist shot high in the air! A huge, black blunt head showed above the water and, a long way behind, a tail with a fluke as big as the ship’s storm trysail. Four whales, much larger than the *Hurricane*, passed less than a boat length away. Four monsters, undisturbed by our presence, swam against the trades a thousand miles from the land and three miles above the floor of the sea. I realized how tiny was our ship that yesterday had seemed so large. The excitement lasted for days and we dug up all the information we could on whales from the encyclopedia, avidly skipped through *Moby Dick*, and endlessly speculated on

what would happen if whales attacked a small boat at sea. This one event and our subsequent research took fully a week from the passage.

The fourth week the wind picked up. Terns and white spiketailed tropic birds increased in number, and flying fish skipped ahead of the ship. The half-way mark lay far astern and we longed for the land. I felt we had departed our world and were sailing to another; a land of strange people speaking a language we had never heard and living incredible lives on the islands of our dreams.

The fresh trades singing in the rigging and the ship tugging at the helm brought Gerry and me out of our lethargy. Hector was dragged out of his bunk to polish what brass there was. We painted the dinghy and scrubbed the topsides while the ocean flew beneath us. We dug out shoes, fuzzy with mould, but found we could no longer force them on our feet. Carefully, clean white ducks were folded by the bunks. I issued a round of fresh water and all hands tortured their faces, shaving off salt crusted whiskers two months old. Land became an obsession and we tossed restlessly in our bunks at night. The quiet existence of the previous week was gone. The complexities of life came back with the proximity of land. Before, we had peacefully submitted to the unconquerable sea; but now we chafed at every hole in the breeze, swore at poor Hector if he was half a point off the course, and trimmed the sails to even the slightest imaginary change of wind. We hated our conqueror with its monotonous procession of waves that tossed our stern a thousand times a day.

Just for spite, on November twenty-seventh, the trade wind died and we lay becalmed all day and all night, only a little more than a hundred miles from the Marquesas. It was a good lesson. Resigned, we spread the awning again and read and slept on deck, rolling not uncomfortably in the lazy sea. Peace returned aboard and we didn't care whether we made land in a day or a week. The engine could be made to run but it wasn't worth the effort. I didn't want to shatter the quiet and heat up the cabin with this foul-smelling device. On the twenty-eighth, our patience was rewarded with a good northeast breeze. We stowed the squaresail, lashed the yard on deck, and under all fore and aft canvas ploughed a creamy wake once more. We were nine degrees south of the Line and, if our chronometer was right, land would be over the bowsprit at daylight.

I was awakened at five o'clock in the morning by shouts from Gerry. I stumbled on deck. The ship was making seven knots and, dead on the head, was the silhouette of an island against the pale sky. The sun rising from a cloudless



horizon caught the tops of the mountains. The bright shadow moved quickly downward until the island of Ua Huka, most easterly of the Marquesas, sparkled in the sunlight. We gulped a hasty breakfast, loath to stay below, and slipped into clean clothes. The wind increased with the sun's ascension and put the lee rail down until the tops of the seas cascaded through the scuppers. I wedged the chart behind the binnacle after spotting the anchorage ahead. Gerry ran the American flag to the mizzen-mast head. In the lee of the land the wind rushed from the mountains in gusts, whipping the smooth water white. Both anchors had been set up the day before. I sent Gerry forward to lay some chain out on deck and to stand by the headsails. Hector stood by the main. The narrow bay opened up.

"Trim in the main," I shouted.

Hector pulled frantically on the heavy sheet while I jumped aft and hauled the mizzen inboard. We leapt to windward, then lost the breeze between the headlands. The shore seemed dangerously close. Figures appeared on the beach.

I shouted, above the crash of the surf on the shingle, "Get the headsails off."

The iron jib shanks rattled against the stays as the canvas fluttered down. We had plenty of way and coasted toward the head of the bay.

"Take down the mainsail."

Gerry cast the halyards off the belaying pins forward and Hector clawed the heavy canvas down on the boom. Bottom was clearly visible. The ship slowly rose and fell in a long swell. I rounded up as a strong gust of wind rushed out of the valley, shaking the mizzen and stopping our headway.

"Let her go!"

The anchor went over with a splash and the chain rumbled out of the hawse pipe and stopped with a jerk at the windlass. The ship fetched up hard on the chain and came to rest, just thirty days from the Galapagos. I called Hector aft to help take off the mizzen. Quickly we furled the sails, breathed a sigh of relief, and looked around. A Melville picture had come to life!

Here was a deep valley like Typee, its floor a forest of tall coconut palms and breadfruit trees, backed by sheer mountains, lush green to their very summits.

The chart gave the name of the bay, Hanai Nai. The beach was crowded with natives. A tall gaunt figure in white clothes under a huge pandanus hat walked through the crowd, stepped on a ledge of rock and hailed us in English. We spilled the dinghy overside. After a month of sun, water poured in the open seams. Hector bailed us ashore and we landed in the surf behind the rocky ledge, getting wet to our waists. Uncertain of our balance, we staggered across the narrow beach.

The tall man introduced himself: "My name's Ray Meliza. I'm from California. It sure looks good to see the Stars and Stripes in this place. By God, I'm glad to see you. I haven't talked to a white man in over a year. Where're you from?"

"Sixty-seven days out of the Panama Canal," I answered. "Our home is in Iowa."

"Iowa! Well, I'll be damned! Iowa. I was born there on a farm near Adel."

It was our turn to be damned.

"Sixty-seven days out! My God, you boys must be tired!"

"We had a good rest at the Galapagos and a better rest at sea," I answered.

"Come on up to the house, the ship is safe in the northeast."

We followed Meliza up the valley. Past thatched dwellings under towering coconut palms, the path led across a clear stream rushing over smooth rocks in a thin white veil, stopping in quiet pools waist deep. The "coconut wireless" had flashed the news of our landing throughout the valley. Everywhere the natives greeted us, looked curiously at our clothes or strange faces and laughed joyously at our expressions of pain when we stepped on a bit of sharp rock in our bare feet.

In a grove of giant breadfruit trees, Meliza's frame, thatch-roofed house was surrounded by bare earth, so dense was the shade. Pigs, chickens, and coconut husks littered the yard. Children stopped play, and stared at us with soft friendly eyes. Hector, with a skin as dark and an appearance not unlike a miniature Polynesian, wandered off with an admiring circle of youngsters of his own stature.

The quiet of the grove was shattered by the strident scream of a stuck pig.

“That,” Meliza said, “will be for the big *kai-kai*. We will eat in a few hours.”

“In the meantime I would like a fresh-water bath,” said Gerry. Meliza brought towels, soap, and *pareus*, a fathom of red calico printed with a white floral design, and we repaired to the stream. The water was surprisingly cold. In the pool below, two women and several small girls, bathing and washing clothes, paid little attention to our nakedness. Their wet, brown bodies glistened in the slatted sunlight; their hair, straight and black as India ink, hung below their waists. The gaiety of laughter echoed in the deep still valley. Refreshed, we wrapped *pareus* around us in the approved style, stretched out on a dry ledge of rocks, watched the gusts of wind tear at the higher palm fronds and the clouds sail across the patches of blue. An occasional white spike-tailed tropic bird flashed across the sky. The sea was remote and the ship forgotten.

“I could stay here the rest of my life,” I thought aloud. Gerry, his bundle of clothes a pillow, was unconscious. Meliza was anxious to talk; but, in the hush of noonday heat, his voice grew distant and was lost beyond the murmur of the stream and the noisy wind aloft. I dropped off to sleep and dreamed that Hector was calling me to take my watch. Awakening, the shadows were long. Meliza, dreamily inhaling our American cigarettes, said *kai-kai* was ready, and we followed him to a long table set up by his house.

Large wooden bowls of *poi-poi*, fermented breadfruit, the consistency and colour of pancake batter; piles of *taro*, a white starchy root laced with purple veins; a whole roasted pig; fried goat, and stewed goat in coconut milk; raw fish bleached with lime juice, whole boiled fish; octopus, sea slugs and shellfish; fresh roasted breadfruit, snow white and smelling like newly-baked dough, crowded the table. Bowls of coconut sauce and decapitated drinking nuts marked each place. Meliza sat at one end and I at the other. Gerry and the head men of the village lined the sides of the low table. Gingerly we started, imitating the natives by putting two fingers in the *poi-poi*, dipping the mess in coconut milk sauce and sucking it off with as much noise as possible. We pulled off pieces of crisp roasted pork, ravenously tore the meat from fried goat chops, took handfuls of breadfruit and cooked fish, but shied at the raw fish. Meliza persuaded us to try “just one bite.” We did. It was good. The raw shellfish were good but the hideous octopus was too much. It was bad enough watching the natives chew the tough, leathery tentacles. The mounds of food disappeared. Meliza interpreted our thanks and we crawled into his house, stretched out on the floor on pandanus mats and spent the night in dreamless sleep.

In the morning, while shocking sleep from our eyes in the cold stream, Meliza told us that he was a photographer and lived in Hanai valley like a king for about ten dollars a month, with the franc at seven cents. His photography was a hobby, but if he sold two pictures a month he could live!

A good escape from depressed America. This lazy valley was heaven and the stream, if not a fountain of youth, was at least a tonic for civilized men. Meliza, I thought, was wise loafing a living, and the net results looked better than the higher income brackets of America's successful. Ua Huka was a seductive wench and there was no dearth of similar ones scattered over the sea to the westward.

We were anxious to be in Tahiti and stayed only a few days, visiting another valley, fishing the windward side of the island and gathering *kava ka* eggs, tasty, with pastel pink yolks, smaller than a hen's eggs. The bottom of the ship was foul, but the natives, with our scrapers and sheath knives, dived under and scraped off most of the barnacles and marine spinach.

Meliza gave us letters to mail—the regular schooner from Tahiti visited the island only two or three times a year—and we left for Nuka Hiva, a few hours to leeward, to show our bill of health and enter the ship.

## Chapter VII

**AT THE** head of Taiohae Bay on Nuka Hiva is the French port of entry for the northern Marquesas. A deep valley runs inland, more fertile than Hanai Nai and much larger. Just back from the water, the unpainted frame houses and tin roofs of the village line a sandy street. Tall palms lean over the beach in an unbroken front on either side of the jetty. On a knoll, the tricolour streams down wind over a cluster of small white, red-roofed buildings, the mark of France against the green. A few natives, half-castes, several Chinese, and the French administrator, doctor, and schoolteacher inhabit a valley that once supported ten thousand Marquesans, only a hundred years ago.

The yellow quarantine flag at the foremast brought out the French administrator, who spoke no English. What little French I once knew Hector had perverted to Spanish, and we quickly came to a gesticulating deadlock over an entrance fee of fifty francs. Learning that there was a man visiting here from a neighbouring island who spoke English, I promised to bring him to the Residency the next day.

In the hot afternoon we lightered a hundred gallons of water aboard from the jetty, which filled our tanks; recording the accurate consumption for seventy-five days from Panama as one gallon and a quart per day for three men.

Plugging up the self-bailing cockpit and filling it with water, Gerry and I had a good cold bath and went ashore to look up the interpreter. He wasn't hard to find. Just off the jetty a white man sat on the veranda of a native house, his bare feet crossed on the low railing, wearing blue dungarees and singlet, with the red and white *pareu* showing above his belt. A pandanus hat with a shell band was tipped low over his eyes. Sharp whiskers grew out of a face as tough as tanned shark skin. I thought he might be asleep. In a port where ships are few and white men scarce, he probably had not seen us land.

"Hello," I said loudly, "we're off the American yacht----"

"Don't I know it... I seen yu comin' in.... I told dis kid here," he jerked a thumb in the direction of a native boy crouched on the railing, "dat she was a Yankee by de way she was pointin' up," he said without changing his position.

I explained our minor difficulty with the administration; but he only shifted his hat a little farther back, and nodded.

We stood bareheaded in the sun in awkward silence. Suddenly Gerry said, "Would you like to come aboard for a drink?"

The bare feet hit the floor with a thud. The sleepy eyes opened wide. "Why de hell didn't you say so in the foist place?" He joined us on the sandy road. "My name is Michel. Are you out of 'Frisco or Panama?"

"Panama," I said.

Without further comment, we rowed off to the ship. Michel swung aboard with the practiced ease of a seaman, glanced approvingly over the ship and stopped short when he saw Hector.

"Where de hell did you get *that*?"

"In Mexico . . . Yucatan," I answered.

"I thought so . . . when I was in de American navy----" He told a longish tale about the fun he had "killin' greasers" in the unofficial battle of Vera Cruz before the World War, and concluded with the treacherousness of all "dirty Mexican bastards." Hector understood little of Michel's rapid-fire conversation, but realized our visitor was not entirely friendly.

There was gin aboard from Belize and Hector mixed iceless drinks with lime and sugar. Mike's capacity for gin was incredible. A continuous tirade of abuse against everything in the entire world, excepting the American navy, poured forth between drinks. He stayed for dinner and slept the night on the deckhouse.

In the morning Mike told us that he had sailed up here in an outrigger from his plantation on Ua Pou, the next island south, to see the French doctor.

Unfortunately, the doctor was away on leave. This promoted a full half-hour's harangue about the perfidy and inefficiency of the French colonial government, Frenchmen in general, and the entire worthlessness of "all the dirty sawbone, croakin' doctor bastards in the whole world."

Going ashore, Mike said, "My old woman is the best cook in Polynesia. Come down to Ua Pou and we'll have chicken and pork." I agreed.

At the Residency Mike paid fifty francs out of his pocket. "Send me d' money when you gets to Papeete," lie said. "Now let's get out o' dis damn' dead hole."

At sea Mike had many pertinent remarks about our seamanship, referring to us as the "Ioway navy." Hikeu Bay, Mike said, "is on de le'ward side o' Ua Pou, well to the so'thard, so if you wants to hold de wind keep to windward o' de island."

In the strong northeast Ua Pou was soon abeam. Silhouetted against the late afternoon sky, the rocky spires, obelisks, and abrupt cliffs looked like a modernistic city's skyline. Around the southern tip it was rough in a tide rip. With a dead fair wind, we barely held our own. I worked in closer to the steep shore and we tossed badly in the backwash from the surf breaking furiously against the overhanging cliffs.

Mike was nervous. "Keep her off, keep her off," he said in alarm.

But we were making good close in and in a few minutes rounded the point to smooth water. A huge obelisk rose up out of the sea like Washington's monument.

"That obelix," said Mike, "is just five miles from Hikeu Bay." In the dark, with eyes like a cat, he picked out his bay, invisible in the black wall of land. We felt our way in with the uncertain breeze and dropped anchor.

"Now," said Mike, "we can have a drink, my nerves need it. You Ioway farmers is too reckless wi' dis boat." It was a ship's rule never to drink at sea and Mike decently complied until the hook was on the bottom.

Leaving Hector aboard, we went ashore. Mike's wife, a Tahitian girl weighing at least two hundred and fifty pounds, smiled hospitably.

Mike said, "When I married her she was de best lookin' gal in Tahiti, but now she's a two-fathom woman an' it takes just dat much squared to make her a dress. I never learnt her no English so as I can talk to me pals the way I wants."

After a supper that exceeded Mike's boasts, we sat around the table under a kerosene lantern, drank diluted gin and lime, while Mike poured neat gin down his throat and expounded his philosophy of life.

Interrupting his tirade of defamatory criticism, I said, "How do you live out here?"

"Can't you see?" he answered. "Pass me de bottle. ... I was comin' out o' 'Frisco on de *Aorangi* oncet an' a lady passenger comes up to me in de bar an' says, 'Oh, Mr. Michel, what do you do way out in the South Sea Islands?' An' I tol' her just like I'm tellin' you. I grow coconuts and feeds de pigs and dat's all there is to it." He poured a liberal portion of gin and continued, "I gets a pension from de navy on account I retired on sixteen years' service, but I ain't hangin' out on de waterfront or sittin' in de Y.M.C.A. or de Seamen's Institoot readin' no magazines. I'm a philosopher I am, and de only thing I reads is philosophy. Will Duranty ... I got it here. ... So I says to myself I'm agoin' back to de islands an' get me a wife what can cook and keep me out o' de whore houses. None o' them blond dirty-neck doll faces for me."

Mike's wife sat motionless, staring vacantly from huge, soft eyes, sleepy and unfathomable under long lashes. Mike with his sharp prominent nose and incessant chatter, his hands graphically illustrating his story, twisted in his chair. He looked a mischievous sparrow beside a Buddha.

Gerry asked, "Had you been out here before?"

"Hell, I used to live in Mangareva," said Mike intolerantly. "Dat's south-east o' Tahiti."

"Were you born there?" I asked.

"Hell no! I come out when I was about six or seven wid me ol' man. He was skipper of a bark. An Eyetalian he was, an Eyetalian doctor, and he was plenty careless too. I got half-brothers and sisters from Fiji to Easter Island. I don't know what me mother was, but I figger she was a Chilean because me ol' man was in Chile about dat time tradin' western Pacific niggers for nitrates. I asked him oncet and he says, 'Shut up, you little bastard . . . you're glad to be alive, ain't yu?' I was plenty scared o' me ol' man so I never ask him again. I grows up wid de natives and talked Tahitian and French before I knowed English. When I was sixteen, me o' man got me a job on a four-master dat was in Mangareva for repairs. I was green as hell and didn't know nothin'; so, when I shipped out o' dere, I smuggled me girl aboard in a copra sack. The mate found her out at sea and the son-of-a-bitch threw us both off in Tahiti widout a bloody cent."



He wiped his perspiring forehead with a hairy forearm, gulped two inches of gin, and continued, "It weren't long 'til a big schooner come in from de out islands wid copra an' the mate signs me an' a Tuamotu boy on for 'Frisco. When we gets dere, de mate paid us off and me and the Tuamotu kid goes to a hotel an', by gosh, neither of us knew nothin'. All night we sets up turnin' de water off an' on, an' argues about how in de hell water run uphill to de t'ird floor; an' turnin' on de electric lights an' wonderin' what made de fire inside.

"I stayed 'til me money was gone, but de kid gets homesick for Tahiti and ships back on de same boat. The foist time I got drunk was in them damn' 'Frisco waterfront saloons; an' I woke up sick as hell at sea layin' on the foredeck of a four-masted ship. I was so dumb I walks back to see the skipper to thank him for takin' care o' me and lettin' me go to sea. The mate stops me before I gets aft so I thank him. He just looked surprised. I tol' him I was no native an' was sick o' de islands an' wanted to see the woild. He says, 'It won't be long, son, 'til you see de end o' de woild because we're bound around the Hom wid a load o' sticks for Noo York!' "

The flame in the lantern burned low, flickered up in a smoky flash, and went out. "Dat," said Mike, "is a sure signal to stop shootin' off me mouth. Tino! *Amai.* "

A huge Marquesan appeared from the shadows. "Dis ape will set you aboard; it will be cooler 'an sleepin' in de — house."

"Why don't you come out with us?" I asked.

"No, I been away an' I think I'll crawl in wid me ol' woman for a change."

In the morning, while making ready for sea, Mike came aboard and said he wanted to sail to Tahiti with us to see the doctor.

"I just got to get reamed out," he said. "It takes me longer to pass water in de mornin' dan it does to shave off me whiskers."

Gerry and I welcomed another hand as well as the prospect of additional entertainment. The wind was fresh and the clouds raced over the mountains.

Anxious to be off, I said, "Bring your stuff aboard and we're all set."

"We got to have meat," said Mike. "Me ol' woman is fryin' up some pork and

we'll put it down in grease so's it won't spoil. An' I don't know about de damn' loway navy, but I needs a drink."

It was not until late afternoon that the pork came aboard. A Marquesan delivered a sack of oranges from the next bay. A load of drinking nuts cast long shadows on the deck. Mike had a good cargo "of the hair of the dog that had bitten him." The wind rushed down the valley and the *Hurricane* jerked impatiently on the anchor chain. Mike went ashore to say good-bye to his wife. We waited. The sun went down in the sea. I went ashore, in the red orange light that painted the clouds rolling over the mountains, to bring Mike off to the ship, and met him walking across the beach talking to himself.

"Hold her west-sou'west, we're bound for the Rio Grande!" shouted Mike hilariously. "My damn' wife," he added soberly, "is pregnant."

"Congratulations!" I said.

"Congratulations, hell!" said Mike. "I been married ten years widout producin' nothin' an' I don't like it. The time ain't right an' it checks too close to boat day. By God, I'll name da little bastard T'eadore after dat gold-toothed son-of-a-bitch, the supercargo on the *Tiare*."

On board, Mike had "just one more for the road," and we hove up short on the chain. The main and mizzen were set with the sheets run out. Under Mike's profane direction, two husky Marquesan boys helped get the anchor on deck and jumped into their canoe as we gathered way.

"Give her the headsails," I shouted, and ran aft to take the wheel. A strong gust of wind filled the jib, swinging the bow offshore. In a strong fair wind dead aft, we winged out the main and mizzen and raced southwest. Three hours later the log showed twenty-five miles. I turned the ship over to Gerry and went below. The wind sang through the rigging and I could feel the surge of speed when a sea broke under the counter. The trades had come to life!

Three days later our navigation put us twenty-seven miles northeast of the low island of Takaroa in the Tuamotus. The first thirty hours out of Hikeu Bay we had logged two hundred and eight miles. Mike was jubilant and praised the ship. We hove to just after dark to make our landfall in daylight, but I kept watches all night to look and listen for surf in case we were off our reckoning.

The Tuamotus, Paumotus, Low Islands, or Dangerous Archipelago, stretch northwest and southeast over a thousand miles of latitude. Eighty atolls, from five miles to forty miles in length, clutter up the chart. These rings of coral rise two thousand fathoms from the floor of the sea, but are only a few feet above the surface. Overgrown with coconut palms, they are visible about nine miles in fine weather from the deck of a small ship. In many places, there are no coconuts and the reefs awash are only visible for about three miles from aloft. Unknown currents sweep through the group and many ships have left their bones to bleach on the coral sand. A barrier across the trade wind routes, these rings of minute life are a nightmare to navigation. Although fine weather is the rule, hurricanes are not unknown, and December is a hurricane month.

“I will be happier,” I told Gerry, “when these islands are behind us.”

I saw Takaroa from the rigging just after daylight, lost it in a rain squall and picked it up again close by. The wreck of a four-masted ship, high and dry on the beach, was a good landmark but a grim reminder.

Mike said, “Dat’s de *County of Roxburg* out o’ Glasgow. She went ashore in de hurricane o’ nineteen seven. Some o’ d’ crew drowned leavin’ d’ ship in boats before she struck. De ones dat stayed by de ol’ man come ashore safe. When de sea went down dey walked off de ship down to what was left of de village widout gettin’ der feet wet.”

The pass, a narrow cut through the reef on the leeward side, ran dead to windward into the lagoon. A strong tide rushed out of the cut, boiling over submerged coral heads, ripping the long swell outside in choppy white crests. Dark waves, topped in translucent green, spilled over on the pinkish-brown reef and retreated, drawing a cascade of white water into the backwash. A fine mist from the breakers hung over the reef. The palms glistened in the intense light.

The engine would be necessary to enter the pass. The monster in the hold, dead since the Galapagos, after a little coaxing showed signs of life with a deep belch of black smoke. Then another cylinder fired; three out of four hit regularly and we moved slowly in, keeping well over to the side of the cut to avoid the strongest current. At the lagoon end of the pass a coral and reef-lime jetty, squaring off the ragged cut, was provided with bollards. The engine, wide open, pounding on three cylinders, eased us alongside at less than half a knot. Natives caught our bow and stern lines and made fast.

“Well, dat’s dat! ” said Mike with emphasis. “You farmers make me nervous and I needs a drink.”

Natives crowded the jetty and carried on a laughing conversation with Mike. A small slender figure in ragged clothing came slowly down the village street, the wide brim of his pandanus hat flapping with each step. This scarecrow pushed his way to the end of the jetty. Pale blue eyes looked out from under the shading hat, a few wisps of bleached hair fluttered over his ears. Hollywood’s version of a beachcomber stood before us.

Mike bellowed, “If it ain’t ol’ Hooty Parker. You ol’ bastard, I thought you was dead. Come aboard and meet me friends.”

“Well, Michel, old friend,” said a very mild voice, “I would be pleased to come aboard.”

The bird flapped on deck and introduced himself formally all around.

Mike pounded the scarecrow’s back. “You ol’ bastard,” he said affectionately, “how is da missus?”

The scarecrow, breathless from Mike’s demonstrative welcome, wheezed in a very small voice, “Oh, she’s well, well and strong. But, friend Michel, I am unwell. I am ill. . . . If these gentlemen would be so kind as to offer me a little drink . . . ?”

“Hector, aguardiente por este Caballero,” I said.

Hector handed up a square bottle and a glass. Mr. Hooty Parker gulped a half-tumbler of gin. His vocal chords struck a low vibrant note of thanks, but a glass of water for a chaser washed out his voice again.

He squeaked, “Friend Mike, Captain . . . , my father-in-law, the chief, is in a very bad condition.”

“Take him a drink,” said Mike.

“No, Michel. He is unwell, he is ill, he is constipated. To tell the truth, gentlemen, he has had no movement for eight days! He can scarcely walk about,” pleaded Hooty earnestly.

Gerry, who had originally stowed our ship's supply of medicine, was the self-appointed doctor. He dug out a bottle of sal hepatica and gave it to Hooty with instructions to give the chief four or five spoonfuls in a bowl of warm water before breakfast.

Thanking us, Hooty started off the ship, but turned and said to me, "If you don't mind, Captain, I would like to borrow a little tobacco and just one more small drink. I will repay you. I will send you some fish."

It was dark before Hooty staggered off the ship. "Good-bye," he said, "I must seek provisions for the home. If I am invited to return in the morning, I will come."

"Get along, you beggar," said Mike, "and see dat you send off dem fish."

"Hooty," he told us, "is a degregated white man, but since he married de chief's daughter he has been sittin' on plenty o' copra an' poil shell."

Hooty not only provided fish but brought them aboard personally. "You see? I tol' yer de bastard was degregated. Here he comes beggin' more liquor," said Mike.

Parker stayed for dinner and we listened to a long tale of woe covering fifty years of ill-health.

Finally, Mike said, "Shut up, an' go get us some vahines. I feels like a hymniny."

"Catholics or Mormons?" asked Hooty seriously.

"I don't care, just so as dey can sing," answered Mike.

Gerry, curious, asked, "What is the difference?"

Hooty explained that the island was divided into two camps, and the difference was not theological but a matter of taste; the Mormons ate dogs and the Catholics didn't. The missionaries had been gone for generations.

We had a gay celebration aboard. The girls sang beautifully; but the night was climaxed when Hooty and Mike did interpretative Tahitian dances. Gerry and I laughed until we cried and our sides ached.

In the cool, early morning, Hooty came aboard excited, borrowed a cigarette and a drink, and announced, "The chief has had a movement!" All hands cheered and Doctor Mefferd smirked with satisfaction.

Later a native came running to the jetty and had a few words with Hooty, who interpreted, "The chief has had another."

Walking through the village that day with Mike, we learned the score was mounting. By afternoon the count was ten! Most of Takaroa's two hundred inhabitants were gathered around the chief's outhouse, built on pilings over the lagoon. The chief, a venerable old gentleman, crouching in the shadows, conspicuous through the open door, held court from his throne while his subjects gathered around. Our gratification changed to alarm when sunset found the chief in the same position.

On the way back to the boat, we stopped to watch the preparation of a native oven. Stones heated from a coconut husk fire in a scooped-out depression in the coral were ready to roast an animal stretched on the ground nearby. A lovely maiden, who the night before had sung sweet Tahitian love songs in Gerry's ear, was cleaning the animal. Moving closer, we saw her bare, shapely arms thrust deep into the intestines of a dog. Live dogs looked on dispiritedly. Friendly Fidos, raised and fattened for food, were numerous in the village. Contentedly, they wandered around their homes licking the hands of their ultimate consumer.

"Last night I was a Mormon," said Gerry, "but tonight I am a Catholic!"

In the morning I had planned to leave, but the sun came up in a blank sky and the wind was dead. Three days we waited in the sultry heat for a breeze, explored the reefs for shellfish with native boys, swam in the clear lagoon, and combed the beach for shells. Fish were plentiful and colourful. Bright green parrot fish ate the remaining barnacles and marine spinach from the *Hurricane*'s bottom and she was as clean as the day she was launched.

The lagoon, less than fifteen miles long, surrounded by an oval of palms, broken in a few places where the reef was awash, was full of shoals and coral heads with deep water between. The white coral sand reflected the dazzling light, and the mirrored heat from the still lagoon built up masses of cumulus clouds that exploded skyward in the rising hot air. Rain squalls often brought relief; cooler air rushed in with a ragged black line of dense cloud, whipping the lagoon in a

fury of white and green, and tearing at the tops of the palms. The barometer was low and the interrupted trades meant danger.

Every morning, as regular as the sunrise, our friend Hooty Parker flapped aboard, complained about his health, borrowed tobacco, and took a large drink of neat gin. His conversation, like his clothes, never varied. Mike slept most of the day on the deckhouse under the awning, but mysteriously disappeared at night. Hector spent most of his time with the amphibious native boys.

One morning a light steady breeze came out of the east, darkening the lagoon with ripples, and we got under way at once. Hooty Parker, a desolate and forlorn figure, stood hat in hand on the wharf, his pale yellow hair blowing over his eyes. The current took us out of the pass ahead of the wind.

The Tuamotus break the trade wind sea; but a long surge, scarcely perceptible, lifted the ship until the tops of the palms on distant islands were dots and dashes on the horizon. Slowly we drifted through the atolls, keeping a lookout at night. Mike said that he could smell reefs, so I often called him at night to sniff the air to check our reckoning. The next day we passed the northwest point of Apataki Island and changed the course to clear Kaukura, with luck, by daylight. But the wind died and we lay motionless on the long swell until dark, when a black rain squall sent us flying in fiery phosphorescence; but soon left us shivering in a light breeze. That night we steered between the last two atolls, ghosting along less than two knots. Mike was forward smelling for reefs. Our eyes strained in the darkness until imaginary breakers and palms appeared in every direction. A black line to windward, shutting out the stars, advanced quickly to the zenith. Mike and I took in the mainsail and waited. We leaned over in a hard puff of wind, then lay becalmed in a torrential rain that beat the water flat with pale, phosphorescent sparks. Gerry and Hector relieved us at midnight. I welcomed the dry bunk but dreamt of the long seas crashing on coral reefs.

In the morning there was no land and no sun, but our reckoning put us well beyond the eastern Pacific's graveyard. With more sea but less wind, we wallowed along, the booms jerking the tackle and the sails slatting. Life aboard eased up with the dangers astern and our destination just ahead.

Mike gave us fatherly advice on how to behave in Tahiti after almost three months out of port.

“When you gets to Papeete,” he began, “you moor de ship over here by dis point where de shipyard is at.” He put his finger on the chart. “So if a storm comes out o’ de nor’west an’ you is a fadom deep in de mademoiselle, you don’t have to worry because you is in de lee o’ dat point.

“When you wants supplies, don’t do no business wid Ah---- the Chinaman. De rat will cheat you.

“There ain’t but one respectable saloon in Papeete where they sells good rum punches wid ice for a franc.

“Don’t say nothin’ about de French to nobody an’ stay out o’ politics or de coconut wireless will run you off d’ island.

“Even if you wants to spit, be sure an’ tell de police foist.

“Don’t try to sleep wid all de women on de island; but get you a good one and stay wid ’er.

“Don’t get drunk ashore an’ make a cahoonney out o’ yerself. Stay aboard de boat an’ min’ your own business.”

After some hundred miles of “don’ts,” the trades set in, and we bathed and shaved and put Hector in white clothes. On the morning of December twenty-third, just three months from the Panama Canal, Tahiti’s Mt. Orohena rose ahead, most of its seven thousand feet lost in the clouds. Off the pass, the French pilot boarded us from a small launch. In through the pass we sailed, across the quiet lagoon, and dropped anchor at the pilot’s signal off Papeete’s waterfront, warped the stern into the coral breakwater along the steep shore, and made the lines fast to old buried cannons for bollards. The French officials came aboard, granted us pratique, and we stepped off the ship on the coral breakwater. Forgetting Hector and Mike, we hurried to the consulate for mail.



## Chapter VIII

**COMFORTABLY** seated on the upstairs veranda of Tahiti's yachtless yacht club, Gerry and I hungrily opened mail and absorbed news from home; tall glasses beaded with moisture left rings on the white painted table.

Papeete's waterfront was alive and smelled of copra and cordage. Little Tuamotu cutters, deep in the water with pearl shell or copra, wedged themselves between heavily sparred, New Zealand built, trading schooners. The shouting and laughter of the crews and stevedores were pierced with the shrill screams of pigs protesting their passage. Beyond, the lagoon was still and blue, and the surf on the protecting reef scarcely audible. To the westward, the serrated skyline of Moorea was hazy in the midday heat.

The blocked-out streets, the waterfront squared up by the wharf, the triangular shadows from the buildings—the cubistic scar of a semi-modern town on the level green—lent a feeling of stability after months of the soft curved lines of ship and sea and cloud-like islands.

Torn envelopes littered the table and folded letters bulged my pockets. Dreamy with mail, I thought of snow drifted high in the windswept yard; the Christmas tree festooned with coloured lights showing through the window; the crystal cold of a subzero night with diamond bright stars when your heels strike a strident note on hard-packed snow; the warmth of the family dinner with a great white oak log blazing in the hearth. . . .

Gerry, shouting with delight, brought me back on the yacht club veranda and I heard and smelled the waterfront again, and felt the perspiration soaking through my shirt. Moorea, a double mirage, converged again in focus.

“Look, Coppy, a check from Allen for a hundred an’ fifty bucks,” said Gerry, waving a slip of green paper.

“God bless our scientist!”

“Viva la herpetology!”

“Viva la France!”

“Jules! Two more rum punches, tall ones.”

We toasted our former shipmate who had so timely remitted our share of the Central American collection.

This unexpected windfall was taken to the Banque de l’Indo-Chine and, by adding two signatures, was converted into a sheaf of franc notes. After ninety days’ privation at sea, Tahiti, the most lovable and seductive wench in Oceania, the Paris of Polynesia, took charge of our affairs. A celebration was neither planned nor mentioned; but, remembering only bits of Mike’s advice, we naturally gravitated to the saloon where rum punches sold for a franc.

By midnight the island rocked beneath our feet and we wound up aboard with a collection of friends of both sexes. Gerry brought the victrola on deck, but a Tahitian appeared out of the night with a guitar, and we silenced the machine. Before turning in, I remember giving an exhibition of high diving from the main crosstrees into the still waters of the lagoon, amid the cheers of the multitude as the splash distorted the stellar reflections.

In the morning I awoke and viewed Papeete with a jaundiced eye. Gerry came on deck, pushed his tousled hair from his eyes, and blinked at Moorea’s tall spires catching the early sunlight. I felt that we had been the leads in an international musical comedy. The principal scene had taken place in Papeete’s main street night club, Quinn’s, where French sailors off the naval schooner, *Zelee*, in blue striped jerseys and red top-knotted berets, danced with lovely Tahitian girls in long dresses with bare feet to the ancient tune of *Papio* under the dour eye of Madam X---, who spoke English and, I think, acted as interpreter in promoting the next act aboard.

Below, a faded wreath of frangipani hung from the cabin lamp, a red hibiscus was crushed in a bunk, laughter tinkled out the skylight.

Papeete rises with the sun and the waterfront was noisy and the streets busy. Smiling, fresh as the tropical sunrise, the chorus from last night’s show stepped from the stern to the shore joining the procession along the old Broom Road, Tahiti’s primary highway.

Gerry said, “Coppy, if we ever write a book, we won’t tell about this.”

“Gerry,” I said, “it makes but little difference. But don’t write home about it.”

Thinking of breakfast, I called, “Hector!” No answer.

“You paid Hector off last night and gave him a Christmas present for good behaviour,” said Gerry.

Hector’s wages were five dollars a month. I did some rapid calculating, based on the very reasonable exchange between francs and iniquity in Papeete, and guessed that we would be without a hand for several days, unless his vanity tempted him into self-adornment. I recalled that his wages in Panama had been spent on a silk shirt of many colours that failed to survive the first rain squall.

Mike appeared. “What did I tell you! You done everything I tol’ yer not to. De foist night in Papeete you gets drunk and makes cahooneys out o’ yerself. I knowed damn’ well you would, Kauffman; but I thought young Gerry had more sense.” He hitched his dungarees up over his *pareu*, came aboard and added, “I needs a drink!” He took two and fell asleep on the deck-house, snoring loudly.

“The pot really called the kettle black,” said Gerry.

A Tahitian boy came aboard and said, “Captain, last night you say for me to come and make cookin’.” He had learned English in the Cook Islands.

I asked him if he could cook. The boy smiled. Mike awoke.

“All Tahitians is good cooks,” he said, and pulled a ten-franc note out of his pocket and gave it to the boy. “Dat’s enough dough to feed all hands for t’ree meals.” The Tahitian headed for the market.

“I tol’ him to bring a bonito an’ fix us all a mess o’ raw fish. It’s de best thing for a hangover.”

Gerry gagged.

Hector showed up, looking as if he had just climbed Mt. Orahena, crawled forward and fell asleep.

It was a hot, windless day and there was no relief on deck under the awning. Gerry and I went swimming, put on fresh clothes and called on our neighbours.

There were two other American yachts in Papeete: the *Four Winds*, a forty-seven-foot ketch, owned by the Whitman brothers from Pittsburgh; and the *Viva*, a narrow, long-ended, low-sided craft, no more than thirty-six feet long, was owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Miller from the west coast. The Millers had made a remarkable and heroic voyage. Mrs. Miller was the skipper and navigator. Her husband was sick part of the time and they had one hired hand who promptly left the ship in Tahiti. On their passage from Honolulu to the Marquesas, they found themselves to leeward of their destination; and, being firm believers of the pilot charts, tried to make westing with the equatorial counter-current against the trades. The twenty-five-hundred-mile passage took ninety days! The Whitman brothers, Barney and Peewee, had lazied across the Pacific two-handed, preceding us by a few months along a similar route.

Before New Year's, the *Director* of Manhasset, L. I., Tahiti visitors for several months, came in from Moorea and warped their stern in, alongside the *Hurricane*. She was a fine old ship, a former Maine pilot schooner sixty feet overall, owned by Bruce and Sheridan Fahnstock. Dennis Puleston, an Englishman, and the navigator; Ned Dair, an artist; and a Panamanian negro called Hey Hey, as cook, made up the crew. Hector and Hey Hey, speaking a common language, became fast friends; and, exchanging only their bad points, both ships suffered from the mutual degradation of their respective hands.

They were a lively lot aboard the *Director* and, with the three ships combined, we saw Papeete with the same eye during our brief stay. The *Four Winds* was staying at Tahiti for an indefinite time, but the *Director* planned to continue on across the Pacific and we made plans to travel together.

Our Tahitian boy was an excellent cook and a good companion. Every morning he went to the market, and we lived well under his guidance for ten francs a day. The variety of inexpensive food contributes much to Tahiti's charm. Avocados, mangoes, pineapples, bananas, plantains, guavas, oranges and limes, breadfruit, taro, coconuts, and Chinese cultivated green vegetables are in abundance. Fresh pork is good; beef, stringy; and there are ducks and chickens. The fish are unexcelled; red meat bonito, colourful reef fish, shellfish, and shrimps complete the everyday list of island-grown food. Imported temperate zone supplies are more expensive. Good wine is two francs a bottle; rum, five francs; champagne is twenty francs. Native coffee, dark roasted and freshly ground, is excellent. After one look at Papeete's market, the most sceptical, unless they have lost their zest for life, will love the island.

Tahiti, the largest island east of Fiji and the highest in the South Pacific excepting New Zealand, is scarcely thirty-five miles long. The population is eleven thousand, half of which lives in Papeete. Chinese account for about three thousand; Europeans, about four hundred; the rest are Polynesians, but few are of pure blood.

There has been much written about Tahiti, and I hesitate to contribute to this volume of literature, particularly after spending less than three weeks on the island with only one short trip beyond the city limits of Papeete. That was New Year's afternoon when we had a cool drink with James Norman Hall and his wife on their veranda in one of the most delightful spots on earth.

The seaport, Papeete, is the face of the island. The heart and soul are in the outlying districts; and I do not feel qualified to write of the people when their thoughts and daily lives are beyond our knowledge. Our time in the islands was spent in Borabora, a small island one hundred and fifty miles to leeward. There we lived with the natives for nearly three months, learned to speak a little of their language and understand their more superficial thoughts and emotions. But, even in Borabora, we waded only a little way into the deep gulf that separates the races whose common ancestors are Neolithic and evolved in such different environment. Although we lived with a Polynesian family, danced with and made love to the girls, and fished with the men, I never knew whether we were accepted because of ourselves or our tinned beef.

Papeete, like any other place in God's world, depends on how you look at it. Stepping on the mail boat in San Francisco with a crowd of people is like going to another hotel to play bridge, stand at the bar, or dress for dinner; the sea is remote and the weather of little consequence. Two weeks later you arrive in Papeete. The more temperate may get up for the landfall at sunrise and exclaim on the beauty of the island; the less temperate will be awakened by the shouting of the stevedores to complain about the heat. The face of Tahiti may not be prepossessing. If you expect to find life as Captain Cook or Herman Melville found it, and be greeted by a fleet of canoes manned by *tapa* clothed natives, bringing off beautiful *pareu* wrapped maidens offering their favours for a bit of iron from the ship, you will be disappointed. The missionaries and the government have been active a hundred years. Tourists, automobiles, and Chinese have come to stay. Papeete, the emporium of trade for eastern Polynesia, is a busy town by island standards. There are taxi drivers, tin roofs, dirty streets, and unpainted buildings, and the natives wear clothes, sad but true. There is even

a movie house showing the old silent western thrillers, gangster pictures, and melodramas of hungry people staring in food laden windows; an incredible condition even to the modern town-bred Tahitian in natty shorts and coloured shirt.

We worked ninety days to see Tahiti, and found the answer to a seafarer's dream. Beauty is there aplenty, even in Papeete; bougainvillaea vines flowering from red to lavender conceal the hideousness of many houses; flamboyants, their wide branches in red orange flames, hide many a tin roof; hibiscus bloom, deep red, under the tall coconuts and mango trees. The fragrance of the frangipani permeates the atmosphere. But, above all, Papeete, gay and friendly, smiling and lazy, offers you all her charms.

But the day of reckoning came. We frantically felt beneath the bunks for francs and centimes, turned all our pockets inside out and soberly counted our wealth—a little less than a hundred francs remained. Tomorrow, I decided, would be sailing day. We looked over the charts and consulted the pilot book for an island where we could hole up for the hurricane season in a safe harbour until the trades set in again in April. Borabora looked the best on paper, but we planned to make all the islands *sur le vent*: Moorea, Huahine, Raiatea, and Tahaa. There was enough food aboard for many months. We needed gasoline, but it was expensive and not really necessary for downhill work. We spent the last day in Tahiti aboard, making ready for sea and watching the life of the town with a detached feeling of sadness.

The governor, Handlebar Hank, in morning coat and striped trousers, was taking his constitutional in the park, his flowing moustache catching the light like crossed bayonets. A bus roared down the Broom Road, crowded with singing natives and top-heavy with produce. Girls paraded the street in colourful costumes with a red hibiscus over their ears. Chinese, in black pajamas, pushed sweetmeat carts festooned with little bells. Out-island natives, like shrouded corpses, lay asleep in the shade of a trading company's store, waiting a passage home. A large pig broke loose and all the available male population gave chase. A big schooner came in from the Austral Islands and the deserted waterfront was immediately crowded. A German countess, with red painted toenails showing from sandals, wandered past the shipping. Two beautiful golden-skinned girls, a mixture of French and Tahitian, pedalling on bicycles in long white dresses, were hailed from the ships moored to the shore. It was painful to watch the life we were leaving. That night the music from Quinn's, still playing

*Papio*, floated down with the land wind.

In the morning, the *Director* and the *Four Winds*, and friends ashore, lined the breakwater to see us off. The pilot came aboard for “zee farewell.” Our Tahitian boy and a large black dog from whom he refused to part were going with us as far as Borabora. He helped Hector take in the awning. The lines were cast off the old cannon bollards and we went to work on the windlass. The ratchet clicked and the chain groaned through the hawse pipes. A fresh breeze blowing across the lagoon shook the mizzen hard, and the sheet blocks banged on the traveller. The anchor broke out and the bow fell away. With four hands we set all sails smartly. We turned to wave goodbye when a black mass of clouds hid the sun. A hard rain squall cracked down and sent us flying. Out through the pass we raced. Breakers thundered on the reef on either side. The strong squall drove us deep in the water, and, like a wedge, we split the confused sea outside. I turned around for a last long look at Papeete but the rain, like a curtain, had shut off the land.

An hour later, when the sky cleared, Tahiti was a silhouette without detail, but Moorea was hard by to port. It was good to smell the open sea again, to feel the boat heel over and smash the blue into white foam. The sting of rain driven by forty miles of wind, the howling and whistling of the squall through the rigging, and the steady crashing drive of the ship made us shout in exultation. There is no better cure for mental or physical stagnation than a ship at sea with all the wind she will stand. It is more exhilarating than a cold shower and a mint julep on a hot summer day. In fact, it is as refreshing as a day ashore after a long time at sea.

The barometer for leaving a port, finances excepted, is simply the zest for life and the keenness of the appetite. When you no longer spend the last half of the afternoon looking forward to dinner, or when the smell of coffee, bacon, and eggs in the morning fails to turn you out of bed like a cant-hook, it is time to go to sea again.

## Chapter IX

**THE SUN** was an hour high, but the village of Vaitape lay breathless in the shadow of the mountain. Far out in the lagoon the light breeze darkened the water in patches. The sound of surf breaking on the encircling reef was scarcely audible. Tall palms leaned silently over their reflection in the still lagoon.

Marii, awake since the first sign of light, looked seaward. Tupua, a smaller island in the same lagoon, was bright green in the sunlight. To the westward away beyond the pass, the island of Maupiti, bold black, stood out of the sea. There would be little wind that day, for in the season of the trades when the wind was fresh Maupiti was lost in a haze. The light sail on his outrigger canoe hung limp and lifeless from the sprit. His small son was loading the canoe with drinking nuts. They would have to paddle to the reef for fish that day, Marii reflected sadly and turned back from the beach, and crossed the island road to his frame and bamboo-plaited house.

His young wife, Pepe, was scraping the meat from a ripe coconut on a flat piece of iron with a serrated edge mounted on a long low bench. She squeezed the rich milk from the shredded meat in a netting of coconut fibre. Marii mixed the milk with salt water and took a kettle of fish from the fire. His wife served breakfast: boiled fish and coconut sauce; tea steeped from orange leaves; and bread and sugar from the Chinese store. Their two children, Marii Junior, and the little girl, Marie, and Moe, the adopted boy, ate hurriedly and rushed out to the lagoon, anxious to take part in the fish drive with the other children.

The night before, the youngsters of the village had woven a net of palm fronds to round up the tiny fish in the shallow water on the shore reef. Quietly they waded out with the net until the water was waist deep for the tallest, and neck deep for many of the smallest; then noisily they splashed in a fine back toward the beach, converging slowly as the water shoaled. Tiny fish flashed in the water like a handful of silver coins. Shrieking with delight, the children caught them in their hands and bit their heads between strong white teeth. The wriggling bits of silver, inert, were dropped in their *pareus* held high with one hand like an apron.

The shadow of the mountain had retreated and the breeze, blowing closer



inshore, fluttered the sail on Marii's canoe. Along the road, men returning from the near slopes of Mount Pahia were laden with bananas and breadfruit. The lagoon was dotted with canoes heading for the outer reef. The Chinese breadwagon, pulled by a diminutive horse, raced by with all the dogs and many of the children in hot pursuit. John Chinaman, from his high seat, looked appraisingly at the young girls washing clothes or feeding the pigs and chickens along the road. He knew the power of sweets and gaily-coloured cloth, and smiled. His small homely body could not compete with the young bucks empty handed; but John Chinaman's hands were never empty. Even if the fathers objected, he could take their vanilla and copra by rendering an account because most all the improvident Boraborans were his debtors.

Suddenly the morning routine was interrupted by a shout from the hills that was repeated from house to house throughout the village. "*Ai-O! Ahe! Poti Haere Mi!*" Away to the southward a tiny dot, occasionally flashing white, slowly moved along the blue line of horizon.. ..

"Borabora looks better from here than it does on the chart," Gerry called down from aloft.

This starfish-shaped island, splitting the trade wind clouds with two precipitous mountain peaks over twenty-three hundred feet high, was completely surrounded by a protecting reef dotted with palm-covered *motus*.

Hector took little interest in the land. Since the departure of our Tahitian boy, the full responsibility of the galley fell on his shoulders once more and his demotion from bo'sun's work to dishwashing had been a great blow to his pride.

Gerry came down on deck and asked, "Coppy, can you get the engine started?"

"No," I answered, "but the pass should be wide enough to tack through."

"I like small islands," said Gerry. "You can know them intimately."

"Yes, and with only five hundred people aboard we shouldn't have much trouble getting acquainted," I added.

The sun was hot and the breeze was faint. The cool shade of a breadfruit grove

and some fresh drinking nuts would be welcome, I thought, as we drew near the white line of breakers on the reef. . . .

Leisurely we had wandered through the Leeward Islands in search of a home until April when the pilot book promised fresh trade winds and a hurricane-free ocean to the westward. Moorea, a beautiful island with a safe anchorage in any weather, was close to Papeete. Fearful lest the lure of the town, only a few hours away, would detract from the contentment of a quiet life, we stayed only a few days and sailed on to the westward.

Huahine, a hundred miles from Tahiti, was hot and mosquitoey. The deep bay, Haavai, on the leeward side, was breathless. Elephantiasis was prevalent, and the people generally less hospitable. It was the only island in Polynesia, excepting Tutuila in American Samoa, where anything was stolen from the ship. Raiatea, largest of the Leeward group, was spoiled for us by the tin-roofed town of Uturoa. It was there that our Tahitian boy looked longingly to windward and disembarked to catch the next schooner back home. Both dog and master had been violently seasick in the finest weather, and both, exhibiting the same symptoms at the same time, lay in the scuppers with their tails down and groaned.

Tahaa, a few miles to the north and enclosed within the same barrier reef, promised the ideal life. The natives, clean and friendly, had not entirely forgotten their legendary Polynesian hospitality. But even the lush valleys and soft green hills of Tahaa failed to hold us with the twin peaks of Borabora beckoning in the distance. We could never rest on an island when another of such intriguing shape symbolized a new horizon, another village, a different lagoon. It was the next bend in the river beyond which our imagination pictured the old South Sea Island life. . . .

The sun was high and the light poured through the clouds around the mountain top. Vaitape was no longer blessed in the cool morning shadow. The fishing was done and the fruit was in from the hills. Fires were kindled for cooking, for tomorrow was Sunday and no work would be done. Pigs and chickens sought the shade and dogs curled up under the house on the cool earth; but the people

paused from their midday loafing and anxiously watched the strange boat tack in the pass against the wind and tide. Marii was excited as the *poti* headed for his end of the village and dropped anchor and folded her wings in the lee of Pahua Point just *off his fare*. His family and neighbours lined the beach. Marii placed his small daughter in the front of his canoe and, throwing a large fish in the bottom, paddled out to greet the visitors.

Our knowledge of Tahitian was scant, but we replied to his smiling “*To-ra-na*,” motioning him aboard. Standing on deck, naked except for his *pareu* drawn tightly around his loins, rigged for swimming, he towered above us, looking as large as the entire crew of the *Hurricane* put together. Quietly he gave us the fish, pointed out his *fare*, and left. His huge silvery calling card glistened in the sun.

Our friendship with Marii grew with a daily exchange of gifts, until, in a week’s time, we moved ashore at his invitation and lived in his house. He increased our circle of friends by running a general repair shop aboard the *Hurricane*, soldering holes in badly battered cooking utensils, sharpening old saws and ancient tools, repairing bicycle chains, and mending lanterns. Although this policy earned us the goodwill of most of the island, it was not until Marii’s house-building venture that the entire island capitulated.

Marii needed bamboo to split and interlace for siding. All other material was on hand; fathoms and fathoms of sennit, carefully made from fibres of pandanus bark rolled in strands between the palm and naked thigh of many a loyal Vaitapian, was ready to ash the cross-beams to the uprights in place of nails. All the poles had been cut and stripped, and the thatch gathered for the roof. But there was no bamboo on Borabora and the nearest source of supply was Tahaa. Would we take the *Poti Hurricane* and go after a load? Marii pleaded. We would. I accepted, eager to help Marii and anxious to see more of Tahaa.

Friends, relatives and in-laws crowded aboard on sailing day and littered the decks with fruit and bundles of clothing wrapped in *pareus*. The men helped sail the boat; the women, clustered forward, wove wreaths of flowers for the gallant crew; the children scampered up the rigging like monkeys, three small babies were placed below in a bunk; and we set sail. Outside in a moderate sea, every native, unaccustomed to the slower motion of a larger boat, became deathly sick; and Gerry and Hector and I tacked the ship to Tahaa. In the smooth water in the lee of the island off the pass at Tiva village, corpses rose and walked

again; wailing and groaning gave way to singing and laughing. Once inside the lagoon, twenty hilarious souls waved to friends ashore. We anchored off the little village of Mori Finua and disembarked our passengers.

It would be tomorrow or the next day or the next before the bamboo would be brought to the beach, so Gerry and I with Hector sailed to the village of Tiva to see our friend William, the fattest man in the South Seas, whom we had met on our way from Tahiti to Borabora. Landing under sail at a rickety T-shaped jetty, we saw William waddling toward us; his stomach, bulging out of his *pareu*, left his legs in a perpetual shadow. While serving in the French Foreign Legion, he had picked up a little English.

“I see *poti* come, I make cookin’.”

I told William, “Bring along the cookin’, we want to go fishin’.”

“O.K. I make lookin’ boy, he come bye and bye.” He lowered himself on deck and requested a drink of *wino* and one *awa awa*, smoke.

His boy come with roasted breadfruit and a basket of mangoes and drinking nuts. William collected six of his friends and we started out die pass after bonito. Outside the reef the wind was fresh and we kicked up a good wake under full sail. One of the men went aloft to look for birds. Tahaa dropped astern and the mountains of Raiatea, with their ever-changing shadows, travelled by in a panorama of different shapes and shades of green. It was not long until the lookout from aloft shouted, “*Ahe! Awupas!*” and pointed a flock of birds off to starboard. We slacked sheets and raced down wind.

These sea birds feeding on small fry indicate the presence of their silver and blue submarine rivals, the bonitos, who attack the food supply from below. Bonito gear consists of a stout bamboo pole about fifteen feet long with a heavy fine the same length attached. The lure is made from a section of pearl shell, mounted with a barbless hook, usually made from a bent copper nail or a carved piece of shell, and fitted with whiskers from the tail of a blond cow.

The birds, chasing the fast moving school, darted one way and then wheeled back in the opposite direction. Six men lined the stern, dangling the lures on the surface. We jibbed and all hands ducked under the boom; then, trimming the sheets, heeled to the breeze and sailed in among the birds. Bonitos leaping out of the water and the birds plunging below the surface confused the sea like tide

over a shoal. For the frantic small fry raided from both sea and air, there was little chance of escape. The bonitos struck the flashing lures and, by a quick heave on the pole, were flung high in the air; slipping off the barbless hook, they dropped on deck, down the companionway or sometimes back into the Pacific. The fish were biting on all six lines, the birds screaming, and the natives shouting as the ship darted after the school first to starboard and then to port. Desperately we tried to keep to windward of the birds, maneuvering the ship under a rain of fish. In a few minutes it was all over; the birds wheeled off to windward and the shoal was lost. But the decks were covered with blood and fish; even William was battle marked, his stomach had broken the fall of several bonitos. We cleaned the decks and counted forty-three fish, averaging about three pounds each, and we had not been able to stay in the shoal ten minutes.

Bonito, cooked, is dry; but eaten raw it is the prize seafood of Polynesia. The dark red meat is cut in cubes, then soaked in lime juice, salt water, and sliced onion for a few minutes until the outside of the meat is bleached white. The fish is then drained and a sauce of coconut milk and salt water is added. It is really delicious, does not smell fishy, and tends to satisfy the craving for fresh beef.

Just at dusk we entered the pass and spent the night at Tiva. William, after dividing the fish, “made cookin’” and built a feast around two roasted chickens with a huge pan full of raw fish for an appetizer.

In the morning we joined Marii at Mori Finua, the next village north, and loaded bamboo. Hundreds of lengths were stacked on deck until the booms would scarcely clear. The loading was accomplished in two hours, but the feasting and celebration lasted two days; we waded through roast pork, taro, breadfruit, poi, chickens, and fish. Most of our Borabora passengers disembarked, but a new lot of Marii’s relatives moved aboard for the return trip, including two very pretty young girls in homemade cotton dresses, with their bare feet tortured by store shoes. With innumerable parcels, baskets, garlands of flowers, clothes, hats, four large Chinese-made sea chests, watermelons, coconuts, mangoes, bananas, and two large five speckled ducks, we embarked. The trading schooner business was picking up. Gerry and I, with our slightly enlarged Tahitian vocabulary, openly flirted with Marii’s two comely country cousins until we anchored again in Borabora’s lagoon, where they escaped to the sheltering houses of remote aunts and uncles.

It would be as natural, I thought, as eating breadfruit to drift into the easy logical

life of Polynesia, and I said, "Gerry, it would be too bad if those two girls fell into the hands of the Chinese."

"I suggest we both talk to Marii tonight and tell him that it would be a very hospitable gesture if he would persuade his two cousins to move in with us at his *fare*," said Gerry earnestly.

That night we described at length the terrors of loneliness for two poor sailors so far from home. Marii and Pepe nodded their heads understandingly; and Marii, pulling on a pair of shorts over his *pareu*, mounted his bicycle and disappeared in the darkness.

Our domestic life was now complete and life was easy, too easy, in this land of plenty where food grew without cultivation and no one seriously worked. We drifted along in the lazy warm weather, becoming more and more Polynesian in colour, habits, and tastes. Permeated with the odour of coconut oil, frangipani, and fish, we had gone native in a big way, lost all track of time, and our past fives retreated to the dim recesses of early childhood memories. The girls took care of the few clothes we wore, and Marii and Pepe cooked. Entirely without responsibility, we came close to understanding the Polynesian's philosophy of life. A food surplus meant more pigs, and more pigs meant more feasts. The philosophy of sex was "When they are big enough, they are old enough!" But there is practically no adultery and, with their inherent love of children, a child born out of wedlock has the same status and is as welcome as one born from a modern missionary marriage.

On moonlit nights there was dancing to the rhythmic beat of drums, made from hollowed coconut logs and shark-skin, usually accompanied by a guitar. But the deep boom of those old native drums was all but drowned out by the beating of wooden sticks on empty five-gallon kerosene tins by the younger generation. The din was terrific, but the more noise, the livelier the dancing. Moonlight softens realities and, under the influence of its silver light crossed by weaving black shadows from the rustling palm fronds aloft, it was easy for me to half close my eyes and drift back a thousand years when the first war canoes scraped the sands of Borabora, landing a valiant race who developed a Utopia and lived in peace with their superstitions and their gods.

Outside of the village, the Chinese stores; the guest house; the gendarme station; and the jetty; the setting was as unchanged as ageless Mount Pahia. Unlike their

more savage Marquesan cousins, a part had survived a century of European domination, and our civilization had barely scratched the surface of their remote islands in the southeastern Pacific. Although copra and vanilla are converted into cash, and cash into cloth, the fundamental life has remained the same for centuries.

Often at night when there was no moon, we would sail across the lagoon to the outer reef with a lantern for crayfish. The natives went barefoot, but Gerry and I wore heavy shoes to protect our feet from the sharp five coral and the many black spiked sea urchins that clung to the slippery rock. At low tide we walked on the reef, listening to the roar of invisible surf outside the circle of light. A wave breaking on the outer ledge would wash over our knees as we braced ourselves against this cascade of foam. The stranded crayfish, visible in the light of the lantern, hurried back to their cavernous homes in the catacombed coral. With the lantern swinging, we would run over the slippery reef and step on their backs, then, carefully reaching down, grab them firmly behind their sharp horns and spiked feelers and throw them in an empty five-gallon tin where they clicked like the winding noise from a cheap mechanical toy. Little fish trapped in pools left by the retreating sea were added to the collection, along with various shapes and sizes of clams. It was a weird feeling within that small circle of light in an invisible world of wind and water to hear the hiss of an intruding sea, to wait tense for the crash and see the reef underfoot flood with white water, then subside, leaving these strange inhabitants stranded to be rescued by the next breaker. Twenty-five crayfish was an average night's catch. We kept them alive under water in a wooden cage hung from the *Hurricanes* stern, and broiled lobster was included in our daily fare.

Our principal activity was fishing. Hour after hour we would lean over the side of an outrigger canoe and watch the natives catch fish without a hook or line. A corral had been built by stringing nets of palm fronds in a huge circle. In the clear water, the natives would dive down, armed with a slender single-pronged barbless spear and come to the surface with a large lazy fish impaled. Often I have seen them spear one and catch another by the tail with their free hand. Gerry and I tried our luck but never caught or speared a single fish. But, with a baited hook and line, it was easy almost anywhere in the lagoon around coral heads or near the pass. Leaning over the stern of our dinghy with hand lines, it was fascinating to watch the colourful fish weaving through their submarine gardens of purple sea fans and fantastic shaped coral. Often a large grouper, tempted from his hidden grotto, would give us quite a tussle, disturbing

the stillness of this giant goldfish bowl by his frantic rush for freedom.

Twice a month a boat from Papeete, the schooner *Poti Raiatea* or the Chinese-owned *Gisborne*, called at Borabora, brought our mail from home with an occasional letter from our friends on the *Director*, confirming our plans to sail together sometime in April. The natives lined the jetty, exchanged gossip with the crew about happenings in Papeete and the Leeward Islands, and sent the news via coconut wireless from house to house around the island. This was the only identifiable day to vary our existence excepting Sunday, when the entire population dressed up in store clothing and went to church. The women in simple but colourful long dresses; and the men donned the best white man's clothing they owned, which was usually only a shirt worn outside their *pareus*; but sometimes they bulged out of an entire suit of clothes, and even neckties, hats, and shoes not seen on weekdays appeared for this unanimous social function. All hands turned out for church, and the morning parade down the road was a gala event. Food was carried in baskets because church was not an hour's event, but lasted all day and most of the night. From early morning they sang until noon, then gathered in the clearing around the simple frame building and ate their food. It was like a farmers' picnic. In the afternoon singing was alternated with preaching and Bible stories read in Tahitian. Then another recess was called for further sustenance, and singing was resumed until after midnight.

Since the first of February, the coconut wireless had flashed the news throughout the island that a large steamer was coming to Borabora. On boat day the captain of the *Poti Raiatea* confirmed the rumour. A cruise ship, the *Stellar Polaris*, was due in Papeete in a few days and the next scheduled stop would be Borabora. Two years previous this ship had stopped here and "the beauty of the island, the intimate glimpse of true native life and genuine South Sea Island dancing" had lent considerable atmosphere to their travel brochure. Gerry and I were more excited than the natives. We emerged from our languorous living, pulled Hector from under the shade of a banyan tree and worked on the *Hurricane*, painting the decks and topsides and varnishing the spars. . . .

The quiet of the village of Vaitape, cool in the morning shadow of the mountain, was interrupted by the long shout of "Ai . . . O!" A white dot under a thread of smoke had been sighted away to the eastward from the windward slopes of



the mountain, and the news relayed from native to native and house to house across the island. The *Stellar Polaris* was coming in! The village seethed with excitement and dressed for the occasion. Like a country fair, fruit was brought in from the hills and piled along the road; grass skirts, hats, drums, and sea shells were displayed in front of the houses; busy fingers wove wreaths of flowers; full Sunday dress was donned. The transformation was rapid but complete; walking down the road Gerry and I looked wonderingly at the strange scene. The natives had done everything possible to disguise their ordinary life that the *Stellar Polaris* had come so far to see.

Gerry said, "The boat should sneak up on the island at night so the natives wouldn't have time to go into their masquerade."

"If the natives will dress in our clothes, let's you and I dress up in the true Borboran manner and sail out to meet the ship," I suggested.

There was no time to lose if we were to meet the boat before she made the pass, for the wind was fight. We dressed in *pareus*, Pandanus hats decorated with colourful shell bands and, with a red hibiscus over an ear and a wreath of frangipani around our necks, we set sail; with Hector in the remnants of his Panamanian finery, Marii in white ducks and singlet, and our two native girls dressed for church. Slowly we drifted across the lagoon, our flag conspicuous from the mizzen masthead. Ploughing a white furrow in the dark blue, the great white six-thousand-ton yacht rounded the northern *motu* and headed for the pass. The *Hurricane*, slipping along in the light breeze, met her just inside, and we dipped the Stars and Stripes to the white cross of Norway. The deck was crowded with people watching the *Hurricane* sail easily up to the lowered gangplank, drop the sails and make fast just after the *Stellar Polaris* anchored off the jetty. We were burned as dark as any Boraboran.

Someone called down from the deck, "Is that Ray Kauffman's yacht, the *Hurricane*?"

In wonder and amazement, I looked up at the row of faces leaning over the white canvassed rail. Gerry answered, "Yes!"

"Then where is Ray Kauffman?" asked the unknown voice.

"Right here," I answered.

“May I talk to him?” said the voice.

“You are,” I smiled.

A woman stepped down the gangplank and introduced herself as a friend of my family’s from Des Moines who knew me when I was only “so high.”

Introductions were interrupted by the bo’sun’s whistle. We were obstructing the gangplank and the ship’s launches were lying off waiting to take passengers ashore. I volunteered to take the first load off, and our friend and her party stepped quickly aboard. Ashore, Gerry and I acted as guides and exchanged details of our trip for news from home.

“If you can get into shoes,” laughed our friend, looking at our feet spread by many months on the hot deck of the *Hurricane*, “we would like you to come aboard as our guests for dinner. Come early and we will have a cocktail.”

We made a date for six o’clock, sailed the *Hurricane* back to anchorage, bathed ashore in fresh water and laboriously went to work on ourselves. Hector oiled the ship’s clippers and gave us each a haircut that looked like a rough shingled roof. We put on white linen suits, constricted our breathing with neckties, and, perspiring freely, rowed out to the steamer in our dinghy in the quiet of a tropical sunset.

Aboard, we were promptly taken to the bar and plied with drink and questions about our trip:

“What do you do at night?”

“What would happen if you were caught in a storm?”

“Do you anchor every night?”

“Are you going to follow the shore line around the world?”

“What do you eat?”

“How much fresh water can you carry?”

“I suppose you take the sails down and use the motor when the wind blows?”

Questions by the hundreds which at first we answered as logically as possible; but, confronted with the superhuman task of having “just one with me,” we faltered long before we made the rounds of the two hundred and fifty passengers; gradually evolving from ordinary men to sea-conquering heroes, our answers became wilder and crazier; our courage and bravery rang through the ship and our admiring circle was three deep around the bar. Gerry’s eyes were becoming as foggy as the lagoon in a rain squall, and I was holding on to the bar. My feet hurt and unconsciously I removed my shoes. Someone announced dinner and we drifted with the crowd to a new setting with music, in a sea of white linen and silver. The menu was an answer to a sailor’s dream; soup, fish, ham and turkey, salad and ice cream were washed down with a variety of liquors. We accepted seconds on the entire fare, answering questions between bites.

After dinner the native dancing troupe, recruited and costumed for the event, came aboard and a dozen pair of bare feet thudded on the polished teak in time to the old native drums. The kerosene-tin orchestra had been ruled out for this formal occasion. Although the boat would sail before midnight, we forgot time and wandered around the deck in a dream, revelling in new acquaintances from New York, Chicago, or the Middle West. The brilliant fights, the music, and the gaiety drowned out the tropical night and the island was forgotten until the ship’s bell tolled and all visitors were ordered ashore. Gerry and I, shouting good-bye to our friends, left with the native dancing troupe and entered the warm reality of the still cloudless night.

We went aboard the tiny *Hurricane*, pulled the mattresses on deck and, sobered by the quiet, watched the blaze of lights and listened to the voices and laughter from the civilized world momentarily anchored a few hundred yards away. A year from home with almost three-quarters of the world ahead of us, the *Hurricane* seemed small and insecure. I was disturbed by the sight and sounds and smell of the life we had left. We lived in the perpetual smell of coconut oil and frangipani; the women, the food, the houses all had that same peculiar scent of coconuts and flowers. The reef and the shore smelled of fish at low tide. But aboard the *Stellar Polaris* were well-dressed white women with their smell of perfume, and I longed for the intimate contact of our own race. It would be years before the winds would blow our ship across three oceans. The *Stellar Polaris* would be home in three months.

While I dreamily watched the reflections of the lights from the ship streak down

through the still water, the band struck up “Anchor’s Aweigh,” the chain groaned up through the hawse pipes with the sound of machinery, the red and green running lights showed, the range lights glowed from the masthead, and the *Stellar Polaris* swung around and, slowly gathering way, glided across the lagoon. The music aboard, a Viennese waltz, floating across the water grew fainter and fainter. The glow of many lights converged and their reflections shortened and disappeared when the gleaming white palace of magnificence sailed out of the pass. The music faded into the murmur of surf. The masthead lights slowly settled as she sailed westward over the rim of the horizon. The wake from the ship travelled-across the lagoon, wriggling the stellar reflections and gently rocking the *Hurricane*, distorted the mirrored palms, and broke ashore in tiny lines of white. A dog barked, but the village slept quietly in the black shadow of the mountain.

In the morning we looked at the empty lagoon, but the only reminder that the modern world had touched at Borabora was the terrific headache that defied sleeping, swimming and aspirin tablets. Life went on as usual in the village; but a few new articles of clothing, a strange hat, a coat or a shirt, that had been traded for curios or fruit, made their appearance in the Sunday parade. Marii and Pepe cooked; we fished with the men or swam on the soft coral sand or reef *motus*, and the children chased small fry on the shore reef. From Marii’s *fare*, the *Hurricane*, framed by the grey trunks of the palms and the huge breadfruit leaves, was a part of the lagoon, and in the early morning calm she rode her inverted reflection. When a canoe passed between ship and shore, the straight spars curled like a brown water snake, then broke in many pieces. Quickly we reverted to the lethargic life from which we had been so rudely, but joyously, snatched.

## Chapter X

**ON A RAINY** March day I stood under the shelter of the tin-roofed shed on the wharf at Uturoa, dispiritedly watching the Chinese-owned schooner *Gisborne* unloading an ancient automobile for use on Raiatea's single beach road. I had just forty francs in my pocket and a small slip of paper: "Bon Pour M... Kauffman... passage sans cabine de Raiatea a Papeete a bord de la goelette a moteur 'Gisborne' sans etre nourrit. . . . Paiement 25 f."

From various coral cuts and abrasions my feet and legs were badly infected, and all the ship's remedies, faithfully applied by Dr. Mefferd, were of no avail. The sores continued to spread until I had fever from the general infection. For twenty-five francs it would be far less expensive to take the regular boat back to Papeete's hospital than beat the *Hurricane* one hundred and fifty miles to windward. We had sailed over from Borabora in the *Hurricane*. Gerry, after depositing me on the jetty, made a spectacular departure for Tahaa in a hard rain squall and was out of sight in a few moments.

The rain stopped and I went aboard to look over the ship. The *Gisborne* was about one hundred feet overall, raised deck, except for a small waist amidship, and had a high clumsy superstructure tacked on. Wet mouldy canvas drooped over the main boom, but the stiff new foresail was as conspicuous as a white flag. There were no available accommodations, but the after deck was protected with an awning.

Unloading was finished and the last of the cargo stowed. Pigs, chickens, ducks, copra, general cargo, Chinese and native families crowded aboard. The air whistle shrieked and the half-caste captain and his French engineer came out of Uturoa's saloon and stepped aboard. The ancient oil-burning engine was started and the boat shook with every stroke of the pistons. The lines were cast off and the *Gisborne*, trembling in every frame, moved slowly away from the jetty. As speed increased, the vibrations became so violent that my vision was blurred and the distant town of Uturoa flickered like an old-time cinema. Suddenly the vibrations ceased. We were still inside the lagoon but perilously close to the reef. The French engineer came on deck, streaked with sweat and oil, leaned over the rail, surveyed the breakers on the edges of the pass, and calmly lit a cigarette.

The captain came up, ordered the foresail set to keep her off; and, with his back to the engineer, leaned over the other rail and watched the palm-fringed shore of Raiatea. We drifted. An argument, started in the bar before sailing, had flared up again; and the engineer had cut off the engine and was staging a one-man mutiny. After considerable haranguing, a truce was called, and once more the deck shook underfoot. The foresail was lowered and we chugged out through the pass.

At sea most of the passengers were seasick, and the crew was kept busy flushing out the scuppers. In fine weather the trip was pleasant enough, but after leaving Huahine it rained; the decks ran water and there was no place to lie down. All night I sat up on a box, shivering with a slight fever, my feet and legs painful to the slightest pressure. There was no food available aboard; passengers were expected to provide their own meals. In Huahine I had spent my last forty francs for six bottles of red wine, hard French bread, and two tins of sardines.

In the morning the long bowsprit pointed to the island of Tahiti like a drunken finger. Hungry and dead tired, I sat on top of the cabin with the captain and engineer, washing down the dry bread with wine. Feeling much better from the warmth of the sunshine and the wine, I saw Papeete again and forgot the smell of pigs and poultry, exhaust fumes, rancid coconuts, and the vomit-strewn decks of the *Gisborne*. In smooth water, the passengers all came to life and the gay, animated scene on deck gave no intimation of the wet miserable night. . . .

The mail boat was in from San Francisco and Bohler's Bar was crowded. I was seated at a table with Denny Puleston off the *Director* and an American, Bob Burrell, whose acquaintance we had made last December, and was extolling the beauties of Borabora to Denny and the delights of cruising in general to Bob, who, after five years of settled life in Tahiti, confessed that he was getting restless, and added half seriously:

"How about me signin' on that ol' mud scow of yours?" Denny said, "You couldn't coax Bob out of Bohler's bar."

"The hell you can't," said Bob. "I want to go to sea again and I've always wanted to go to Singapore. When I was mate on the American Export Line, I made all them Mediterranean ports, but the hands all said that if you ain't been

to Singapore, you ain't been nowhere."

The rest of the *Director's* crew joined our circle and rum punches went around again. Ned Dair, with his hair over his eyes, sucked on a pipe with a noise like a horse stepping in deep mud. Brothers Fahnstock were in a good mood and the party grew hilarious thinking up all the reasons imaginable why Burrell wouldn't sign on the *Hurricane* while Bob countered with many reasons why he would.

"All you have to do," I said to Bob, "is pack up and go to Borabora with me on the next schooner."

Bob swore he would. Conversation was becoming difficult because an argument, started at the next table among the hands off the mail boat about horse racing in New Zealand, was reaching a crescendo, and we had to shout to make ourselves heard.

"What's Gerry doing all by himself on the *Hurricane*?" Denny shouted.

"I just got a letter from him," I answered, reaching in my back pocket. "It will give you all a rough idea that he is up to no good."

We retired to a quieter corner of the bar and Denny read Gerry's letter aloud:

*"Dear Coppy:*

*We are still in Tiva waiting for what it takes. The engine has flatly refused to start since last week so we will have to sail all the way. We had damned good food in Mori Finua and now have the boat reasonably well loaded—18 stems of bananas—a half bushel of mangoes—six watermelons—about five kilos of green coffee—one large speckled duck—dirty decks—oranges—papayas—lemons and peppers for the Ickspay.*

*"Business is fine, thank you. I confined it all to Mori Finua, but still had to ship a stern face when the Raiatea gendarme paid me a little visit here in Tiva. Fortunately it was just done to pass the time of day.*

*"Your bedfellow William is in fine fettle—we had barely tied up Sunday when he shouted from the beach to come down to his house. He was chasing his stomach*

*around with a half-plucked chicken in one hand and a machete in the other. The semi-nude fowl had one large wing feather sticking in its head—it seems that was the way he killed it. Well, he makum carry (curry to you) all time. He now borrows the 22 to shoot the chickens in his back yard. I hope the novelty never wears off.*

*“Our other acquisitions in the way of plunder are: four pillows (assorted) and three photographs. One is of Marii’s ‘papa’ and his family standing around a corpse—the old deacon with his arm inserted in his white coat front. The others are of local dandies taken in some Papeete shop. We will save the duck feathers for you. We might also save the flesh and bones until you get back. Don’t tell the Director about it though or they will all hands come along. Sawdust is plenty good enough for them.*

*“Our little friend from Mexico has his ups and downs. He is now at swords points with Wm. It seems the latter, in addressing him for a little service—a fire or a cup of rice—beckons to him much as a dog would be addressed—whistling and a come-on gesture. Well, he is now purple. He does not blame the ignorant natives but places the whole blame on us. They have taken the example, Hector says, from the way we treat him. Just like a dog. In all seriousness, with a broad smile I tried to settle the matter, suggesting to the Mex that I would speak to William about it. I told him I would tell Wm. point blank that our sailor was not a dog and should be called Hector—he insisted that was his name. Then he felt a bit abashed and improved his mood by begging that I say nothing to William about the matter at all.*

*“How did you like the way we left Raiatea?*

*G.”*

The next morning when I returned from the hospital, I found Bob aboard the *Director*.

“Ray,” he said, “was you drunk yesterday or do you really want me to go?”

Although I had not taken the conversation seriously, I liked Bob. He was a genuine soul, and we really did need another hand.



“Bob,” I said, “pay your own expenses ashore and share the cost of food aboard the boat and you’re welcome, but the *Poti Raiatea* sails day after tomorrow, which doesn’t give you much time.”

“One day is all the time I need to leave,” said Bob.

The deal was closed, and we made out a list of supplies. Bob, having considerable experience in the islands, suggested that we take along a load of trade goods—principally soap, sugar, flour, rice, fishlines and hooks, *pareus* and singlets—and sail to Penrhyn Island to trade for pearls, pandanus mats, and hats. The *Director* was going there and we planned to meet in Borabora and race to Penrhyn.

My infections and tropical ulcers were much improved, so Bob and I busily gathered together the supplies and his personal belongings and had them loaded aboard the *Poti Raiatea*. I cashed the last check on my letter of credit, paid my bills, and once again said good-bye to Tahiti as Bob and I sat on the after deck of the schooner and watched the island grow smaller and smaller. . . .

The first of April was drawing near and the winds were fresher. The island of Maupiti was usually lost in a haze and the canoes flashed across the lagoon under sail with the natives riding the outrigger lifted high above the water. We no longer went fishing, but worked aboard the ship making ready for sea. The atmosphere was changing. Marii and Pepe moved about the *fare* with a heavier step. The girls laughed less frequently and stared out across the lagoon where the sea lumped up on the barrier-reef.

One night when the wind rattled the palm fronds, the rain beat down in torrents and the surf roared angrily on the reef with a rising sea, we had the victrola ashore and some wine from Papeete; but there was not the usual spontaneous dancing or singing.

After a long silence, Marii, in slowly spoken Tahitian, said, “I awake and look out to sea and the *poti* is there; it is good. One day I look out to sea and there is no *poti*; it is not good and I am sad. *Haere Merikee iata miati*. Stay here, sleep, eat in my *fare*. We will be your father and your mother. The sun will always shine and there is plenty of food. In *Merikee* no money, no food. In Borabora no money, plenty food. When the moon is full we dance, sing, and laugh. You leave, we will be in darkness and shadow. Why do you go?”

There was no answer. Pepe blew out the kerosene lamp and we lay in the dark security of the house, listening to the wind and rain as the storm raged over the mountain. I wondered why we were leaving that which we most sought. We had left home a year ago to get away from a streamlined life; and yet we were putting to sea in a small boat and would strive for twenty thousand more miles just to go back from where we started.

## Chapter XI

**THERE** was no wind. Hector, sluicing down the hot decks with buckets of sea water, muttered, “Absolutamente no y viento,” and ducked as the main boom swung inboard. Bob squinting at the sky remarked, with the assurance of an old sea dog, “It’s a----flat calm,” and profanely gave me a hand getting in the slatting mainsail. Gerry was out on the bowsprit furling the jib and trailing his feet in the lumps of slick blue water that rolled and pitched the ship. The mizzen and staysail were left on, sheeted in flat to help steady her, but the heavy canvas slatted and the reef points whipping against the sail sounded like rain on a roof. The iron shackle on the sheet block banging on the traveller was silenced by a lashing with a rope end.

Wet with perspiration, we lay on the deck-house with the awning between us and the blazing sun, our skin chafing on the paintwork with every roll of the ship, dispiritedly watching a wisp of black smoke following the two bare poles on the *Director* scarcely three miles to the westward, and speculating on how many hours we would have beaten our rivals if the wind had held. Aboard were only five gallons of emergency gasoline, while the *Director*, with a drum of fuel oil, was maintaining a schedule. Gerry said that he was now convinced that the most valuable sail on a boat was the Diesel.

The first day out of Borabora in a moderate breeze we had bowled along at six and a half knots under all sail and by dark the *Director* was hull down astern. But in the morning our exuberance had died with the wind until we lay writhing on the uneven surface of a glassy sea like a drunken porpoise. Our destination, the atoll of Penrhyn, eight degrees south of the Line, was five hundred miles northwest; Borabora was only a hundred and thirty miles astern, and I thought of the farewell feast when Marii had killed a pig and roasted it whole on the hot stones of his native oven. It had been a gala event. The *Director*, arriving from Papeete on April first with a good cargo of Tahitian rum, bought in bond at a ridiculously low price, had generously contributed to the hilarity of the occasion. The huge dinner had been served in front of Marii’s *fare* on a long low table decorated with flowers, with banana leaves for plates.

Sadly I remembered the last night ashore when our girls had cried softly, gazing

seaward into the starry night. Practical Bob had consoled us with the thought that, with Tahitian women, out of sight was out of mind and that, as soon as the *Hurricane* was hull down to the westward, tears would dry and we would be forgotten. But I wondered about Marii and visioned again his face, with tears silently streaming over the smooth brown skin as he stood motionless on the end of the jetty. In the background, the village, with its widespread flamboyant and hisbiscus-lined road, the huge breadfruit and mango trees and the tall palms that leaned over the wind-darkened lagoon, had sparkled in the late morning sun. I had looked aloft to gauge the direction of the wind outside and saw the white puffed clouds of a trade-wind sky drifting across the naked face of the mountain. Waving goodbye we had cast off the lines and sailed out of the pass just ahead of the *Director's* bowsprit, entering once more the world of water and sky. Before dark the twin peaks of Borabora had dropped below the horizon and, with the island gone forever, life was limited again within the ship. . . .

The sun settling in the sea, without a cloud to paint, momentarily reddened the tops of the swells. Optimistically, I kept regular watches all night, with instructions to call me when the wind came back. In the heart of the trade wind belt with the southern winter coming on, calms were rare and of short duration, according to the wind chart and pilot book. But in the morning the sun came out of the sea into the same blank sky and in two hours the heat was intense, with not a breath of air stirring for relief. The lumps of blue were ironed out and we lay quietly, the canvas scarcely fluttering with the gentle roll of an almost imperceptible swell. Under the awning we closed our eyes to keep out the reflected light from the glassy water and patiently prayed for the night. Tomorrow, always tomorrow, the wind would come.

For eight days the *Hurricane* lay becalmed with only an occasional cat's-paw to fill the sails and shorten the distance to Penrhyn by a few miles. I no longer kept watches but hung a white light in the rigging and all hands slept on deck, still as death, through the cool windless night. During the long hot day Gerry pounded the typewriter on deck, bringing his correspondence up to date and beyond, thought up new ways to serve canned foods, splashed buckets of sea water over himself or crawled aloft in desperation, scanning the horizon for a ship or even a bit of driftwood, anything to vary that dead oily heat-reflecting ocean under that white hot sky. Bob slept most of the time or regaled us with stories of his adventures ashore in various seaports throughout the world. Hector thrived on calms when the ship made so little work, and amused himself drawing pictures with coloured crayon. With an Indian's love for colour, he laid it

on thick, and on Easter Sunday he drew a lurid picture representing the resurrection of Christ and tacked it up in the galley. And a light breeze came out of the northeast, sending us thirty-five miles on our way during the next twenty hours. Bob had stuck his knife in a check in the mainmast, and Gerry and I whistled for wind, but Hector, successful, said, "Capitan, I breeng zee wind." But it died again and the heat hung under the awning and the decks were too hot to touch. We read as much as our eyes could stand, counting the hours until the sun would set. With a lookout for sharks, we often swam over the side and looked at the red copper paint on the bottom of the ship, trailing a line from the chain plates to help us back aboard. Once, Gerry and I, from sheer boredom, launched the skiff and rowed around and around the ship, watching the reflections curve over the glassy swell.

On the morning of the ninth day, a bank of clouds spreading over the horizon ahead of the sun withheld the heat and promised wind. Gerry and I scrambled up the rigging to the crosstrees and looked anxiously eastward. The water under the line of clouds was dark.

"Is that wind or shadow?" Gerry asked.

"It must be wind because the low clouds are moving fast," I answered.

"Look, Coppy," said Gerry, excitedly pointing astern. "Wind for sure."

Turning, I saw little patches of ripples, darkening the water, spread slowly across the sea until the calm shiny areas were reduced to irregular strips on the new pattern of ruffled surface; then a faint breeze whispered in my ear and a breath of cool air caressed my naked back.

"Take in the awning," I shouted joyously down to Bob; and, swinging on to the main halyard, slid to the deck where the breeze stirring aloft was not yet felt. Life aboard exhilarated. Gerry was doing acrobatics descending the main rigging. Bob, with his credulous blue eyes wide open, and grinning from ear to ear for the first time in several days, worked furiously to clear the decks. Mattresses and pillows were tossed down the companionway. So long had we been inert that I sent Hector below to look after the galley and see that everything was stowed for sea. The cloud bank was approaching the zenith and the line of dark water was visible from the deck. The mizzen and staysail filled, gently moving the ship. I jumped to the helm and the ship swung slowly around

on the course. Little swirls and bubbles trailed off the keel. Hilariously we shouted and sang as the mainsail unfolded and fluttered aloft with the clicking of patent blocks. The slack sheets slowly straightened and the booms, lifting slightly, swung outboard. The jib was set and the bow, slicing the little lagoon-like waves, sounded like a spring trickling over small stones. We heeled to the freshening breeze and the water boiled under the counter.

The line of clouds was overhead and the wind sang through the rigging, whipping the *pareus* around our knees. We raced along in water still smooth. The sky to leeward was bright with sunshine, reminding us of the dead but hot world we had left. To windward great curtains of rain obliques down to the sea. The wind in the rigging increased to a steady hum and a column of water shot through the lee scuppers. Down, down we went until the lee rail was smothered in white water. I felt as if we were flying and looked aloft at the dark clouds racing over the grey sky. The sheets were tight as violin strings. The sea was building up, but so hard was the *Hurricane* driving that she lay over deep in water, steady as a boat careening on a beach. The wind increased, shrieking in the rigging; then the squall burst and the rain thundered on deck, darkened the white sails and sun-bleached lines, and beat the whitecaps from the sea.

“Soap, soap,” I cried, and Hector dived below, coming up stark naked with several bars of soap. All hands stripped and scrubbed in the driving rain until the scuppers ran suds. Taking turns on the helm, we washed our hair, our *pareus* and bed sheets as fast as possible, fearful lest the rain squall would blow over and leave us lathered in soap-suds. After the intense heat, the rain was icy cold and we shivered, our skin covered with goose-flesh. In half an hour the wind eased up a little and a long line of light sky showed to windward. To leeward a great rainbow arched across the sky against the black background of the departing squall. Frantically, we washed off the soap with the last of the rain.

The sun beat down again but its warmth was welcome. The wind held and the water was alive again, sparkling all blue and white. Little puffy clouds floating across the sun cast purple shadows on the sea as they followed the squall to the westward. Our clothes, hung up to dry, flew gaily from the rigging. All hands were eager to take their watch and feel the ship tug at the helm. The calm was forgotten. Soon now, we could look for the tops of the coconuts surrounding Penrhyn’s pearl lagoon.

## Chapter XII

**PHILLIP JOHN WOOTON**, New Zealander (part Maori), Resident Agent and undisputed king of Penrhyn, liked visitors. As soon as the anchor had settled on a white sand patch five fathoms down clear of coral heads, he swung his fifteen stone aboard, welcomed us with a broad smile, and then with a very few words chased off the ship about twenty of his loyal subjects who had climbed aboard from the consort of small native sailing craft that had surrounded us, clamouring for the job of pilot at the lagoon's entrance. Then he turned to Bob with a jovial: "Well, Bob, old chap, how have you been keeping?"

"I been livin' in Tahiti," answered Bob, which seemed sufficient explanation, and introduced Gerry and me to his friend Phillip whom he had met several years ago when, as mate on a fishing sampan from Honolulu, he had called at Penrhyn.

"What became of your old cutter?" asked Phillip.

"I sold her. The French made me quit tradin' to the Tuamotus and I been settled down until these Ioway farmers got me to go to sea again," said Bob.

I ushered Phillip below to show the ship's papers. Although the decks were clear of natives and the breeze poured down the unobstructed skylight, it was unbearably hot from the little use we had given the engine running in the narrow pass. Phillip said that the calm was extensive, the *Director* had used its motor all the way after it had left us, and that there had been no breeze at Penrhyn. Bob and Phillip exchanged South Sea Island gossip and, after bringing their histories for the past five years up to date, switched the conversation to pearls, not the white pearls we had seen from the Tuamotus but the beautiful rare golden pearls from Penrhyn's lagoon. Gerry and I were fascinated.

"Come ashore," said Phillip, "and you can have a look at this year's harvest. Bring along a change of clothes and you can bathe at my place; there is plenty of water in the tanks."

Cool fresh water sounded like heaven. We gathered clean white shorts and shirts

and, anxious to get off the ship until the cabin cooled, dropped over into King Phillip's waiting boat. On the way we passed close by the *Director* and hurled insults at both craft and crew, receiving back better than we gave.

Crunching over the loose dead coral, we followed Phillip to his frame and corrugated iron roofed house, large and commodious, elevated a few feet from the sand with a wide veranda covering two sides of the central structure. It was situated in the heart of Omoko village. The three hundred-odd inhabitants kept the coarse, white coral walks clear of fallen palm fronds and coconut husks. A few dwarf breadfruit trees and several stands of bananas struggle for existence in the poor soil; but the flowers and shrubs planted around the houses were decorative and a dense forest of coconut palms provided ample shade.

By late afternoon the fickle trades had died again; but, refreshed from our bath, seated on Phillip's shady veranda with a moderately cool drink of rum, lime juice, and water, it was a pleasant contrast. And with our eight-day blistering calm still fresh in mind I told Gerry, "We'll wait right here until the trades really decide to blow."

Gerry agreed and added, "The prospect of trading for pearls sounds fascinating to me, and we can't get anywhere in this kind of weather."

The *Director's* crew came ashore and the conversation about the race and our comparative runs sounded like any Long Island yacht club transferred to the South Pacific as we watched the reflections from our two ships twist in the lagoon in the last of daylight. Phillip announced that dinner was ready and we moved to another part of the veranda.

After supper we sat in the cool darkness, the glow of cigarettes intermittently flaring brightly, and listened to Phillip's deep voice tell of pearl diving in the lagoon.

"Sharks? Occasionally a big fellow comes in and then we quit diving and all hands get after the shark until we kill him or chase him out to sea. Those little yellowish sharks with the black tips on their fins are harmless. Eels are the bad actors, those big spotted fellows. They have sharp teeth and their skin is so tough you can't cut it with a knife."

I threw away my cigarette and, as the tiny meteor arched over the veranda rail, I was startled by a scuffling sound of many invisible feet in the gravel below.



Phillip roared into the night. Silence. The boys of the village were gathered around and, when a glowing cigarette was tossed over, a wild scramble ensued and the fastest was rewarded with the few remaining puffs on the discarded smoke.

“How can eels kill a diver?” I asked.

“Drown him,” said Phillip. “They wrap their tails in and around the coral and will grab a man by the wrist when he reaches for shell and hold him under water. You can’t pull your arm loose once the eel sets his jaw and you can’t pull the eel out of the coral.”

Again the conversation was interrupted by the wild scramble of skidding feet in the gravel after another cigarette stub. Phillip roared louder than ever and resumed,

“But we dive season after season without an accident of any kind.”

“How much are the pearls worth?” Gerry asked.

“Not much any more. The market has been off for several years. Japanese cultured pearls are ruining the European market, but a really large fine pearl is still worth money, plenty of money in India. I’ll show you what I mean.”

Phillip rose from his low deck chair and we followed him inside the house, warm from the light of kerosene lanterns. He cleared a space on a long narrow central table with a cover of dark red plush embroidered on the edges in gold thread, then disappeared for a moment into a back room and returned with two small sacks and a cigar box.

“Now here is the ordinary run of pearls; imperfect,” he said, emptying the contents of the box on the red table cover. Hundreds and hundreds of pearls caught the light of the lantern: most of them, the iridescent white to golden colour, but a very few were black. They were odd in shape: tear drops, pear-shaped, lopsided, flat, and many on closer examination revealed pin holes and whitish flaws in the general sheen of the exterior. “This is junk, there is not two hundred pounds in the whole lot. But we sell it. The Indians cut them in half for settings in rings, pins, and tiaras.” Phillip slowly gathered up the “junk” and poured it back into the cigar box and untied the strings of one of the sacks. “Now these are valuable, almost perfect but small.” A cascade of beautiful round

pearls spilled out on the table. “You see, they’re all about the same colour and there is scarcely a flaw in the lot. These little fellows are ‘seed pearls’ for the ends of a necklace. If the market comes back----,” dreamily mused Phillip, “well, there’s a lot of money here,” and he slowly gathered up his treasure. “Several thousand pounds’ worth, ten years ago.”

“Now, boys, here’s what I have been saving—waiting for a decent price.” He carefully untied the strings of an old canvas sack and a double handful of gorgeous large nacreous globes rolled out on the table, reflecting the light in a soft golden sheen.

I gasped, “Those are worth money in any market, aren’t they?”

“Yes,” said Phillip, selecting a large pearl that looked almost as big as a marble, “this, even today, will buy a fine motor-car in New Zealand. The real perfect large pearls will always be worth money.”

Good heavens, I thought, our host is sitting on a pile of wealth. “And what,” I said irrelevantly, “do you intend to do when you sell out?”

“That,” said Phillip, “is a long story. I might do just what you are doing.... I tried living in New Zealand several years ago but I was soon sick of paved streets and shoes. I have been out in the islands too long to ever go back. But the way you boys live appeals to me and I like your style of boat.”

Going out to the ship, Gerry said, “Good Lord, Coppy, we should turn back the pages of history a hundred years and play pirate.”

“Even so, I wouldn’t like to tackle Phillip,” I laughed. “Tomorrow we’ll see what luck we have trading with the natives.”

That night a rain squall freshened the atmosphere and sent us hurrying below from the top of the deck house with sheets and mattresses to the close cabin; but in the morning the trades failed to follow the disturbance and the lagoon was like a sheet of glass. Before we had finished breakfast, a canoe scraped alongside and we heard the sound of bare feet padding along the deck. More canoes came and soon the decks were crowded again. Dark faces peered down the companionway and peeked through the port lights. I gulped the last cup of coffee and with perspiration oozing from every pore went on deck. Every available outrigger canoe from Omoko village surrounded the *Hurricane*.

“Come out, trader Burrell,” I called; and Bob’s sunburned nose showed above the companionway. “You know more about this trading business than I do.”

“What do you all want?” asked Bob.

“Pearls,” said I, and the word had a magic effect on the natives, who rushed forward pressing us in a small circle. Hands furtively dug into invisible recesses of their scanty clothing and came out closed fists, reluctant to open up for collective bargaining.

“One at a time is more better,” said Bob, designating one of the more insistent natives to go below and show his pearls.

In the hot cabin, the hand opened, revealing a roll of soiled cloth which was carefully unwrapped like a dirty bandage from a sore finger until five or six iridescent little globes lay luminous with a distinct golden sheen against the creased dark palm. The bidding started on the largest, which was about one carat but not quite perfect, at one pair of old pants, but the native held out for pants and shirt. On the other smaller but perfectly round pearls, we bid soap—one bar for the smallest, and two bars for the medium sized. It was accepted and Gerry dug out the necessary soap, and I poured five pearls in an empty medicine bottle. I produced a pair of not too badly stained white ducks, tempting the native to part with his large pearl. . . . I increased the ante by five bars of soap. . . . Silence. Bob mentioned sugar. . . . No sale. . . . Flour! . . . Success! I told Hector to fill a ten-pound tin container from a sack and ushered the native on deck. Gerry, who is so allergic to flour that he sneezes like an explosive insect spray gun when a sack is opened, ran on deck with: “Coppy, why can’t you trade ’em sugar?” but, with the interest in the galley at heart, he started exchanging soap for fowl.

One chicken, one bar of soap; and several canoes raced for the shore to fill the order. Bob and I continued bargaining for pearls, with Hector dishing up soap, flour, sugar, and tinned beef. Before noon we had the small medicine bottle almost full and we decided to quit because of the unbearable heat of the stuffy cabin with every opening blocked by curious faces. On deck, six hens and a large rooster huddled in the shade of the deck-house, eyes closed and beaks open with the heat. Gerry also had acquired several large pandanus sleeping mats and two finely woven hats made from palm fronds bleached white, soft, and light as a feather.

In the noonday heat, Phillip's shady veranda was more attractive than pearls at any price, and with difficulty we cleared the decks, left Hector to build a coop for the live stock, and rowed ashore for the shower rigged from Phillip's rain tank.

Although the lagoon was as glassy as a dead man's eyes, the *Director* would leave today regardless of the wind. In the afternoon, with a feeble north breeze just filling their mainsail, and with a chantey: "We want to see Samoa," they chugged out the pass, belching black smoke from under the counter. With the lagoon to ourselves, I squinted at the cloudless sky and felt content to wait in the cooler shade of the coconuts until the southeast came back. It was a longish wait with little to do but trying to keep cool, so we swam from a little patch of sand near the jetty, revelled under the shower, and every morning looked across Penrhyn's nine-mile lagoon where the tops of coconuts dotted the horizon on the other side, waiting for the well-ordered ranks of trade wind clouds to come up with the sun and send us to work making ready for sea.

Just a week from the day that we had watched the *Director* sail, a rain squall from the eastward tossed the *Hurricane* in the choppy lagoon sea. When the slate had cleared from the sky, the wind blew intermittently, then steadily, from the east-southeast, and we said goodbye to Phillip and his sacks of pearls, his five hundred loyal subjects, and the coral-head-studded lagoon. With civilized American Samoa and its small naval base and ham and eggs just nine hundred-odd miles downhill, we sailed out the pass in a five-knot breeze, with Gerry aloft conning the ship through the reefs.

## Chapter XIII

**THE** *Rain Maker's* blunt head deflected the moisture-laden southeast trades upwards to the cooler air of two thousand feet where, condensing into rolling black clouds, they precipitated their moisture in Pango Pango's dog-leg harbour and rain thundered down on the *Hurricane's* newly-painted decks.

"Coppy," said Gerry, "why did you have to pick Samoa to paint the decks? Don't you ever read fiction?"

"I thought Maugham had rain just to create atmosphere," I said, retreating to the shelter of the closed-in barge alongside. , Gerry followed with a rag and a bottle of turpentine and we rubbed the grey paint off our hands and arms, dispiritedly watching our freshly painted decks pock-mark with raindrops.

"The hell with it," I said. "We'll leave her as she is. We'll not slip so badly on a rough paint job."

The rain on the tin roof of the barge was almost deafening. I shouted, "Say, how about that letter of Mike's, introducing us to his old shipmate—what's his name?"

"Milton J. Cruze," answered Gerry.

"You have a memory like an elephant, but can you find the letter?"

"No. I gave it to you and that means it's lost."

"How are you coming with your paint work?"

"All right, below the elbows."

"O.K., let's get changed and look up Cruze. Maybe he's like Mike."

"He couldn't be," Gerry said, and jumped off the barge to the plank laid from the *Hurricane's* rail to the companionway.

We cleaned up as best we could and entered the Navy's canteen at the foot of the wharf, bought some cigarettes and made inquiries about Milton J. Cruze. Everyone knew Johnnie Cruze. "But don't call 'im Milton," they admonished. "He works at the power plant when he's sober. But if you steer up the street you'll most likely find 'im in one of the local gin mills."

We waited awhile until the noise of the rain ceased; and when the sun poured down again Pango Pango steamed.

"Let's go, Gerry," I said, and we slopped up the road past the barracks and parade grounds and officers' houses to the native part of town.

A phonograph scratching out Hawaiian music drew us to the first beer joint where two Samoan girls were dispensing suds to several of the local lads, part Samoan and part Navy.

"Has Mr. Cruze been here?" we asked.

"Johnnie? Yea; he left about an hour ago."

"Thanks."

We wandered farther up the road to the next bar.

"Have you seen Mr. Cruze?"

"Johnnie? Hey, Pete, yu seen Johnnie?"

"Yea. . . . He just left. . . not ten minutes."

The next place we asked, "Is Johnnie here?"

"Johnnie Cruze? He was here not long ago."

"The trail is getting warm," I said to Gerry. "Let's look in at the first beer joint again. Maybe our friend travels in circles."

At the first bar they suggested that we try the canteen. Someone had seen him going down the road in that direction. We hurried back, having worked up quite a sweat, and, with our canvas shoes splattered with mud, reentered the Navy's

canteen.

“Johnnie? Sure, he’s here. He just stepped out to look at your boat. I told ’im you were lookin’ for ’im.”

“Thanks.”

We walked out on the wharf and saw a small man in blue dungarees, his hands in his pockets, leaning against a piling, his back toward us.

“I’ll bet that’s Johnnie,” said Gerry. We walked up behind him, our soft-soled shoes making no sound on the wharf.

“Mr. Cruze ?” I asked.

The small man started, then slowly turned a round face warped out of shape by one bulging cheek, surveying us with suspicion. His mouth slid across to the side of his face and a far corner opened and a very weak voice said, “That’s me.”

“We’re friends of Mike’s,” I said. “He told us to look you up.” “Mike . . . Mike who?”

“Arthur Michel.”

“Oh. Ua Pou Mike,” said Cruze brightening. “How is the old son-of-a-bitch ?”

“Just fine. . . . We took him from the Marquesas to Tahiti.”

“So you been shipmates with ol’ Mike.” Johnnie was warming up. “Come on up and we’ll have a couple o’ cold ones,” he said; and, placing two fingers over his lips, ejected with considerable force a brown stream of tobacco juice that curved over the piling and splashed out in the harbour. The one bulging cheek receded slightly. We followed Johnnie back up to town, exchanging only a few formal remarks about Mike or the *Hurricane*.

It was not until we had the two, not very cold, cold ones that Johnnie really loosened up. Although relieved of his huge cud of tobacco before drinking and both cheeks were the same size, he still talked out of one side of his mouth through habit. He introduced us all round the bar as the Captain and mate of the *Hurricane*, turned on the phonograph, ordered another “cold one” and said,

“Captain, you and your buddy come home and meet Kate . . . Kate, the queen of the mud flats, with the starfish feet.”

“Thanks, Milton,” I said absent-mindedly.

“Don’t call me Milton or I’ll get madder ’an hell.”

“I’m sorry, Johnnie. . . But who’s Kate ?”

“My wife . . . but when you see her,” he said confidentially, “don’t tell ’er I been drinkin’ or she’ll get madder ’an hell. . . . How about another cold one ?”

“This one’s on me,” I said, and ordered three more beers. Johnnie took two-thirds of a bottle in one gulp and burst into a Samoan song in his high-pitched squeaky voice.

Gerry whispered to me, “Imagine telling Kate that Johnnie hasn’t been drinking.”

“It’s gettin’ late, Captain, and we gotta go see the queen with the starfish feet.” Johnnie swallowed the last drop of beer and, stuffing his right cheek full of scrap tobacco, started uncertainly for the door.

The heat of the day was gone and the sun, down behind the mountains at the head of the bay, caught only the tops of the coconuts with light. To the eastward, heavy clouds were again building up over the *Rain Maker*.

“We’re in for a drenching,” I said to Gerry, “unless we hurry.”

“It can’t be much farther; the end of the bay is just ahead,” said Gerry.

The walk was doing Johnnie good. His hilarity was receding with the distance home and he plodded soberly along. “Now remember, boys, don’t tell Kate we been drinkin’ or she’ll get madder ’an a----and won’t fix us no dinner.”

“Won’t she be madder than that when she sees two strangers arriving without notice?” I was becoming a little alarmed about the formidable Kate.

“Hell, no. Kate knows Mike an’ any shipmates o’ Mike’s are O.K.; but don’t tell her I been drinkin’. She don’t mind if I have a couple o’ cold ones around home,



but if she finds out I been drinkin' with the boys she'll get mad."

Darkness was hastened by the low clouds spreading over the deep-walled harbour like a roof. The east wind brought the smell of wet earth. In a few minutes it would rain. We hurried. The road curved abruptly around the head of the bay and a little wooden bridge arched across a small stream. In the flat lowland was a heterogeneous collection of tin-roofed frame houses on stilts and several rounded Samoan houses with their cane-thatched roofs surmounting the symmetrical palm trunk uprights set in a base of clear coral stones. Plaited palm fronds between the uprights were raised and lowered like Venetian blinds. These Samoan houses blended perfectly with the landscape, but the square frame structures looked like cracker boxes dumped in a park. We waved to Oswengo, the native chief who was our laundry man, standing in front of his large oval house; and a little farther, Johnnie stopped in front of a bungalow and bellowed: "K-a-a-ate!"

A large motherly Samoan woman in a cotton dress came to the door.

"Kate, I brought two o' Mike's shipmates. You remember Mike. He was a signalman in the Navy on my ship. This here is the Captain, and----." Down came the rain like kettledrums on the tin roof, driving us indoors. "—And this here is his buddy. These guys come all the way out here in a little sailin' vessel. An' Kate, the Captain's thirsty; bring us a couple o' cold ones."

Kate's friendly smile faded just a little when she left for the kitchen from which emerged several curious faces, all of whom were introduced in turn according to size. Kate's family was a large one; there were six on hand from fourteen to four. Photographs of weddings around the wall denoted several older sons and daughters that had married and moved away.

Kate, who spoke good English, was asking Gerry leading questions as to where we had found Johnnie, when he reappeared dressed only in a *lava lava*. The oldest girl, Lotty, brought a guitar, and all hands stamped their feet in time on the board floor as Johnnie went into his dance. His ankles and tattooed forearms were swollen with *mu mu* (elephantiasis) and, with a fresh load of tobacco in one side of his face, he looked like an animated cartoon of Popeye, the sailor. This hideous imitation of the lovely Samoan *Siva-Siva* made us roar with laughter; and all the children, and even Kate finally, joined in the mirth. Johnnie was a success. He had danced his way to forgiveness. . . .

We had landed in Samoa after a slow hot passage from Penrhyn: two weeks to make less than a thousand miles. As sick as we were of the fickle trades that alternately blew fresh then let us down, we were sicker of delving in Hector's dishpan; for Hector lay flat in his bunk and could scarcely move after the first few days out. We had taken him, protesting, to the hospital; the words hospital and torture chamber to Hector were synonymous. When the young Navy doctor came aboard to report on our hand's condition, he sadly shook his head and said, "If you open up any page in the medical book, poor Hector will have just a little of it." Three weeks at least it would be before he could return to the ship.

With time on our hands, we decided to overhaul the *Hurricane* while the Navy was working on Hector. To make life easier we hired a Samoan boy, Fotu, who, trained in an officer's kitchen, was an excellent but extravagant cook. The cold storage plant provided most northern fresh foods, and we looked forward to each *gringo* meal as work slowly progressed aboard. Between rain squalls, we scraped and varnished the masts and booms, overhauled the standing and running rigging, and installed a new exhaust on the engine. Despite the rain-marked decks, the *Hurricane* shone like a new toy and we were anxious to go to sea again.

Johnnie Cruze often dropped aboard about the time "the sun was over the yardarm" and inveigled us up to town for "a couple o' cold ones." In the evenings we sometimes went to the "movies" or bowled with friends in the alley in the Navy's canteen. But we had little interest in Samoa other than getting the ship ready for sea. The native life around the naval station was more perverted than Borabora on boat day.

Although "Samoa for the Samoans" is the administering Navy's theme song, the lusty natives have been petted away from their honest industry of harvesting bananas, looking after their breadfruit, or even catching fish. They prefer to beg *pea soupo* (tinned food) from the station. A good hurricane that knocks down the bananas will put most of the island on relief. But, contrary to many islands in eastern Polynesia, the population is not declining and they are healthy. Good doctors plus American sanitation have just about kept disease off the island; and, although beggars they may be, they will be healthy beggars as long as the doctors tramping the hills with a horse syringe of salvarsan chase the *yaws* to the remotest corner of Tutuila.

It was not until Sam Elbert came aboard with his thorough knowledge of the Samoan language that our respect for the natives increased. Sam was a friend of mine from Des Moines who had been knocking about the islands for several years. We had more or less followed his tracks from the Marquesas westward, corresponding through the slow medium of writing to our respective families for the exchange of news as to our whereabouts. In fact, it was not until we sailed, taking Sam with us to the Fijis and stopping at an almost unknown port on the western tip of British Samoa, that we really appreciated the Samoans.

The one or two native adventures we had here on Tutuila left us a little cold. Petty thieving in the harbour was cleverly and expertly done; although, under the watchful eye of the thoroughly honest, courteous *Fita Fita* (native police), no important item could be stolen, little odds and ends of gear often disappeared. One morning I awakened to find that a canoe had slipped alongside during the night and the loose ends of the downhauls and halyards had been cut off with a knife. Nevertheless, due to the naval stores available, it is an excellent place to overhaul a ship; and the peculiar mechanical genius Americana is evident in the machine shops.

But it was not until Fotu, our extravagant cook boy, and his brother insisted that we accompany them across the bay to their village for a feast there that we had our first glimpse of Samoan hospitality—Tutuila style. Fotu explained that it would be a farewell party for the *Hurricane* as well as a feast in appreciation of the privilege he had enjoyed as messboy on the ship. It sounded interesting and we praised the friendly, honest heart that beat beneath the smooth brown skin; and so volunteered to contribute beer for the festivity. The date was set and we agreed to go, excepting Bob, who still kept a mysterious four o'clock date that no power of persuasion could change.

One night in June, Fotu rowed across the starlit bay with Gerry in the bow and a case of beer and me sharing the stern of the dinghy, anxiously watching the twinkling lights of Fotu's village draw near. No sooner had the keel of the skiff gently touched the sand than men and women rushed to the beach, their shouts of greeting echoing under the gloom of the palm grove; and, lifting the case of beer from the seat beside me, triumphantly bore it head high through the village. Gerry and I helped draw up the skiff and unceremoniously followed Fotu to his house where his brother issued us a white *lava lava* each. We repaired to a cool mountain stream to bathe, feeling more romantic than a school teacher in the Caribbean.

Refreshed and hungry, we wandered back to Fotu's American style house and suggested to our host that a beer would be in order. In a few minutes, Fotu's brother appeared with only one beer but two glasses. Thirsty, we downed it in a hurry and asked for another. Fotu appeared this time and said that the beer was finished, his friends had consumed it all. Then a delegation entered and suggested that we send across the bay for another case. I whispered to Gerry that I thought we were fish, but I was willing to go one more round just to see what would happen. But our confidence returned when we went into another room and sat around a table piled high with food. Fotu had served up fried chicken, southern style, and mashed potatoes and gravy. "We've seen nothing like this since the States," I told Gerry. And we silently blessed Fotu's former employer, who must have come from Maryland. Eight places were properly set around the table and we took our seats. My mouth watered at the golden brown piles of chicken heaped on the plates, and the mounds of snow-white mashed potatoes with gravy flowing from their crater tops like lava. Famished, I nervously fingered my knife and fork, waiting for the signal to start. At the head of the table, Fotu's brother picked up his plate and I dived in, burying the fork to the hilt; but, before I could bend the elbow, the plate was rudely snatched from under my nose. I looked up and saw the two Samoan girls who were seated at the table whisking off all the plates and food and throwing them out the window. Gerry's face was a picture of thwarted desire and amazement. Surely, I thought, I have gone crazy; but, no, I felt the table and it was there. I looked to the window at the disappearing food. It was not being thrown out but graciously received by many outstretched brown hands from the darkness outside. Gerry, with a salvaged chicken leg held in one hand like a baton, exploded, "Good God, Coppy, when in the hell *do* we eat?"

Fotu explained that it was just an old Samoan custom. When the table was as bare as a scrubbed deck, we retired to the kitchen and ate scraps. The cream of the feast had been greedily consumed by the cordon of friends and relatives around the house.

We then waited through some indifferent dancing, still nursing a hunger, until the second case of beer arrived from across the bay. In an amazing and mysterious manner, this second case disappeared, bottle by bottle, into the night. "If only Sam Elbert was here," said Gerry, "we might at least have an explanation."

I was convinced that we had been "done in" by our messboy. We left in a small

huff and our dignity suffered further when we found that the painter had been stolen from our dinghy. Fotu denied any knowledge of the theft when I angrily pointed to the cut rope end. Wearily rowing *Hurricane*-ward, Gerry partially consoled himself, attempting to pick out the Southern Cross through the small cleft of the harbour entrance. I remembered seeing a few cans of Argentine beef in Fotu's kitchen and wondered, because the brand was the same, whether our inventory had shrunk during Fotu's reign.

In the morning, although my suspicions were not definitely confirmed, there was a reasonable doubt. And when Fotu came aboard, I gave him his wages to date and ordered him off the ship, explaining that it was just an old American custom.

Hector came back aboard full of stories of the excruciating pain suffered in the local hospital, but was able to do a little light work. The *Hurricane* was almost ready for sea, and I warned disappearing Bob that sailing day was drawing near. The *Director* had long since gone Fiji-ward and the trades were the freshest in our Pacific history. Sam Elbert moved aboard, anxious to be off. We made a farewell trip to the mud flats to see Johnnie and his queen with the starfish feet; and were ready for sea.

On sailing day I came aboard, clearance papers in hand; the awning was stowed and the stops on the sails loosened. Gerry and Hector were stowing away the fresh supplies. A strong breeze was blowing, and the decks of the *Hurricane* were black from cinders and dirt whipped off the ground behind the jetty.

Gerry said, "We're all set, Coppy."

Alternate sunshine and shadow flickered over the scene as dusty looking clouds raced overhead. Once out of the harbour, I thought, we'll really go west. And I cast off the lines from Samoa.

## Chapter XIV

**THE** red buoy marking a three-fathom patch in the fairway dropped out of sight in a valley of dirty green, then rose on the sea, leaning to leeward, until the crest smothering the round base in foam canted the cone-topped structure straight into the wind.

Dipping downward, the *Hurricane's* bowsprit plunged into a steep sea like a pelican diving for fish; but the wall of water lifted the bow up and up until the dripping sprit painted the slate grey sky and a cascade of white water washed the decks from stem to stern.

"There goes the last of Samoa's dirt," shouted Gerry.

Again and again we plunged and rose, but the red buoy moored on the three-fathom patch stayed just off the beam.

"We can't make it!" I shouted. "We'll have to set the mains'l."

"Good God!" said Gerry, "her rail's in the water now."

"Quick! Get Bob and Hector on the halyards. It must go up quickly or she'll luff herself out o' the bolt ropes!"

Sam, deathly sick, soaked from spray, clung to the mizzen shrouds and looked longingly at Tutuila's steep shore, which was close, much too close, and the palms leaning before the southeast with their fronds trailing down wind like tattered green banners.

With the last stop off the main, the canvas filled like a parachute, then whipped up the mast, cracking like thunder: the spar shook and the decks trembled. I left the helm and gave Gerry a hand on the sheet. Little by little we inched her in. Jumping back to the cockpit, I held her off, just a bit, and down went the lee rail as we smashed into the seas and I watched the buoy drop astern.

Bob, jumping into the main rigging to keep dry, shouted, "We're bustin' 'em wide open!"

The *Hurricane* was getting to windward and off the lee shore we went. Eight miles to round the most southerly point of the island and then we could slack off and run west by north. The jib sheet was pulled out as fine as a bending line. If nothing gave way . . . crash!—and a sea broke on the deck-house. Anxiously I looked aloft. If nothing gave way . . . that eight miles was as good as done.

The wind moaned through the rigging; the drilled holes in the top of the stanchions whistled a low note, but the holes in the pipe turnbuckles shrieked; the music of a ship in a hard wind rose above the sound of breaking seas.

Away off to the windward the sea piled up high on a seven-fathom bank, then spilled over, white; like distant mountain peaks, snow-capped, they rose above the surrounding hills and valleys. To leeward the blunt point of the island, with its ledge of coral, stopped the waves that came six thousand miles from the coast of South America, smashed them into a welter of foam, and great geysers shot high in the air through the eroded holes in the battle-scarred, pock-marked face of the low coral cliff. The point was abeam.

“Slack off!” I shouted. And, as the sheets ran out, the spars, canting dizzily against the sky, slowly straightened, the rush of wind and water lessened and the motion eased. “Passage-making weather!” Our spirits, save Sam’s, were as high as the wind as we rushed downhill to the westward with the dangers astern.

“No supper for me,” gulped Sam, and dived into his bunk. Hector and Gerry, with the fresh food from port available, built a dinner while I strained on the helm; and Bob stood by watching the boiling wake, flanked by wide paths of foam, mark our descent down into each valley of blue. The patent log wound up nine nautical miles the first hour from Tutuila’s southern point. The wind showed no signs of easing up; low grey scud raced over the sky. The light faded quickly but colourlessly into night and the black horizons accented the whiteness of the breaking seas, the cold green phosphorescence flying from the bow and the whirlpools of sparks trailing aft. Hector staggered forward with the running lights: his face glowed first with a warm red light as he swung into the port shrouds and then turned a ghostly green as he eased across the decks, sheltering the starboard light within his jacket.

Before leaving Pango Pango, the Matson liner, just in, reported a force six wind outside with force eight in squalls; but it did not seem that strong, and the *Hurricane*, running free, cold with spray, took no solid water on board. Below it

was comfortable and, with the companionway closed, quiet. Only a ham swinging in the galley thudded against the bulkhead and the pots and pans clink-clanked in the locker. A sea occasionally breaking under the counter yawed the ship and rumbled beneath the bilge. The water racing by the planking only a foot from my ear was the music of a fast passage that brought contented sleep.

In the morning we picked up Savaii, largest and western-most of the Samoan islands. The sun was bright; the dirty grey had been blown from the sky; the wind was still fresh, and the sea choppy as we approached the coast, which was low, sloping gently inland to the mountains six thousand feet above the morning mist. But Sam's appetite returned when he focused his eyes on the solid mass of land.

"Savaii," he said, "is the least known of any of the Samoan islands. There may be a few villages that have never seen a white man."

"The chart shows an anchorage off the western tip," I said, and asked Gerry to bring up the pilot book. Sam promised us a redeeming glimpse of real Samoan life if we could anchor somewhere. Bob was always ready to go ashore.

Gerry came on deck with the pilot book and read: "Felialupo —however you pronounce it—Road lies between Capes Salia and Avaiaoa, and has an anchorage in the southern part."

"Damn it," said Gerry, drenched from a dash of spray. The pilot book dripped water. He stood up, drained his lap, and resumed:

"The roadstead is divided into the northern and southern parts by a broad coastal spur; in the northern part of the roadstead there is a reef and many rocks which dry in places at low water. In the southern part the five-fathom line is about two hundred fifty yards from the shore. . . ."

"Duck!" I yelled as a sea broke abeam and the wind blew the top across the deck, soaking all hands in the cockpit.

"Damn it!" said Gerry again, wiping the salt water out of his eyes. "Is there anything else you want to know?"

"Is that all?"



“No, but I’m going down for a jacket. Read it yourself.”

I continued: “. . . two hundred fifty yards from the shore. The roadstead affords good protection against easterly winds and ground swell. The sandy shore is overgrown with palms.”

“Sounds safe enough,” offered Bob.

“I wonder if there’s a village there?”

We speculated on the land around the point and hung our spray-drenched clothes in the warm sunshine. The weather was moderating and the decks mostly dry, but we still had a six-knot breeze and the low coast of Savaii, close by, passed in a procession of headlands and shallow bays.

In the afternoon we rounded the most westerly point and anchored off the palm-fringed beach between the capes, protected from the fresh trades; but, contrary to the pilot book, the swell came in from two directions and the *Hurricane* rolled uncomfortably. The surf on the beach was dangerously high but seemed less at the north end of the roadstead. A few houses showed through the palms but there was no sign of life—not a canoe bobbed on the uneven surface. Strange, I thought, for most everywhere we had been in the islands the canoes, often to our annoyance, surrounded the ship as soon as the anchor splashed over the bow. Perhaps the village was inland and the beach houses only occasionally used for fishing.

Sam, because of his knowledge of Samoan, agreed to accompany me ashore if we could effect a landing in our unsurf worthy dinghy. Crouched over the taffrail, we waited until a swell lifted the skiff within reach, then dropped in and pulled away from the ship. I shouted to Gerry that if we stacked up on the outer reef, we would swim out away from the breakers and for him to slip the chain and come after us at once with the motor.

Rowing over the lumpy water, we skirted the edge of the coral, barring the northern part of the roadstead, looking for a break in the reef. We worked in until the coral gardens rose up and almost touched the skiff as we fell into the trough of the bottle-green seas just outside the breakers. But the reef jutted out into the sea like the jawbone of a shark, presenting an unbroken curve of jagged white. Many houses of the village showed through the palms. It was larger than I had thought, yet there was no sign of life; the white sand beach, undotted with men

or canoes, reached from cape to cape.

Every seventh or eighth sea, a giant comber, broke on the coral and carried white water clear to the shore. A little farther to the north, the break seemed less violent. I rowed up and waited. Minutes passed. A quarter of an hour we rose and fell off the line of surf. An extra large sea piling up astern passed under the dinghy and crashed ahead, leaving us in temporary smooth water. "Sit tight!" I yelled and pulled for shore. On top of a moderate sea we crossed the reef with a dry skiff. The lagoon, scarcely two hundred yards wide, was shoal and full of sharp coral, and the soft beach ahead looked pleasantly safe. Another outsize comber crashed on the reef and the white wash, spreading across the lagoon, surged by the dinghy, half filling it up with water. We bailed and rowed, just keeping afloat; and, when the next large sea came in, the wash helped us pull the dinghy high on the steep sandy beach.

Sam breathed an audible sigh of relief; I was covered with perspiration. We started across the deep, hot sand, squinting our eyes from the reflected light. A few curious young faces, peering around the palm trunks, ran away at our approach.

"Wait," said Sam. We halted at the edge of the village while he called a greeting in Samoan. A few children appeared in the deserted street, hesitant but curious. Sam talked to them and they responded eagerly, smiling and friendly. Then a few men gathered around us, spoke to Sam, and offered to escort us through the village.

"Where is everybody?" I asked Sam.

"Most of the men are fishing around the point. . . . I told them we were chiefs, and we are going to meet the high chief of the district."

In the palm grove it was cool and our pupils expanded to the soft green after the glare of the sea and the sand. There were no signs of European dress and the houses of round Samoan design were bold, upright against the curved palm trunks. We were not followed by the usual clamouring horde of children, but led by two stalwart men to a large house in the centre of the village, raised on a double foundation; the smooth upright pillars, bearing the high thatched roof, casting definite shadows on the level white coral stones. Under the roof, the high chief was seated cross-legged on a pile of woven mats.

We entered and Sam warned me to sit at once in the same position as the chief. Feeling stiff and awkward, I obeyed, and the high chief clapped his hands. Three women appeared with a large wooden bowl and a handful of twisted roots.

“*Kava*,” explained Sam, as I curiously watched the roots being soaked in water and then wrung out again and again. A pale brownish liquid like muddy water resulted, which was dipped up in a half coconut shell and passed around. The chief poured a little on the ground before drinking. We followed suit. A bitter taste, but spicy and aromatic; the after-taste was pleasant.

“Ask him to send out for Bob and Gerry,” I said. Sam nodded. “Also, I would like to get our dinghy back aboard.”

“We must bring back a present for the chief.”

“There’s plenty of stuff aboard. I think we both should go in the dinghy and have the natives follow us in canoes, just in case.”

“First we must call on the village chief—the number two man,” said Sam.

The high chief stood up and we made our departure. Our two escorts, standing outside on the terrace, led us toward the south end of the village to the only frame house in Felialupo. A Samoan in white duck trousers and coat stepped off the veranda, shook our hands and addressed us in slow halting English. A belt with a badge and a bunch of keys proclaimed his office: a sort of D.

O. appointed by Apia, the capital of British Samoa. It was the only indication of the Empire on Savaii’s western peninsula.

The *Hurricane*, he said, was the only yacht ever to touch here. Most of the younger natives had never seen a white man. Years ago a British gunboat had anchored in the roadstead, but no other ships; excepting the little motor schooner from Apia with a half-caste skipper and a native crew that called twice a year, exchanging the luxuries of sugar and rice and cloth for copra and cocoa beans.

The sea was noisy after the quiet of the grove and birds, flashing white, cried raucously over the line of reef. Four men launched two outrigger canoes with beak-shaped ends hung with kauri shell. At a small opening between two high rocks at the very end of the lagoon we waited for a break and then shot out to sea in the backwash, our skiff between the two canoes.

“If we had known about this pass,” I said to Sam, “it would have saved us a lot

of rowing.” This small cleft in the rocks had been invisible from the ship.

Seaward the *Hurricane* rolled, showing her red copper-painted bottom as she leaned over on a swell, and then the spars tipped toward us and the deck-house was lost in the trough. There was less wind outside but the swell was increasing, and we found Bob and Gerry hanging on to the stanchion rail, anxious to get off the ship.

After gathering together a box of trade goods, they scrambled with considerable agility into the bottoms of the canoes. The dinghy was left trailing and Hector, catching up on his sleep, snoringly agreed to watch the ship. Sam and I pawed over the stuff in the box, which included sugar and rice, the high chief’s request, and a handful of Woolworth’s best jewellery, also two cigarette lighters advertising a brand of roofing.

“Our popularity,” said Sam, “is now assured.”

On the top of the sea, we shot between rocks like a surfboard and glided to the sandy shore. Easy if you know how, I thought; and we wandered up to the high chief’s house. The *kava* ceremony was repeated for all hands while Sam conversed with the chief and interpreted to us that a feast was planned, then a dance; we would spend the night, for the surf was not safe after dark.

Tired from the heavy weather of the night before, we were grateful for the peace ashore. The palm trunks were black against the sunset and the fronds aloft drooped inert. Darkness rolled quickly down from the hills and a lantern was hung from a crossbeam in the high chief’s house.

Cross-legged we sat on the mats and dipped into the wooden bowls of food. Boiled fish, chicken stewed in coconut milk, a sticky glazed *poi* of bananas and arrowroot, and a dish we had never tasted before were ceremoniously served on individual banana-leaf plates by a dozen men dressed in fresh green leaves who ran in, making considerable racket, and disappeared again in the darkness.

I passed a tin of cigarettes around while the women cleared the mats. Silently we smoked, listening to the wash of the sea. Sam nudged us and we moved back on the mats with the natives, leaving a space in the centre under the single lantern. I longed to stretch my legs but forgot my discomfort when six young girls with *lava lavas* of brown and white painted *tapa* cloth, naked from the waist up save for a necklace of tiny coloured shells, their bodies shining with coconut oil,

danced slowly into the circle of light, their feet in time to the tapping of fingers on hollow log drums; moving in unison, the yellow lantern picking out the highlights, glistening on cheekbones, shoulders, and breasts. Gracefully the hands and arms expressed the dance. The black night left nothing visible but the dancers' brown bodies, weaving, casting monstrous shadows on the pale pandanus mats. There was nothing in the world except within that circle of light. I no longer heard the sea or the gentle land breeze rustling the fronds; only the tap, tap, tapping of the drums and the shuffle of feet. Here was reality embodied in six souls interpreting love and beauty. This perfection of body was life. All else was as futile as machinery.

Suddenly the dance stopped. The girls faded behind the dark curtain and the light spread, first catching the whites of the eyes of the watching natives, then the interior of the high chief's house until the forms of the spectators and dancers were revealed crouching motionless in the shadows. The sound of the sea was close again. A dog barked. A gust of wind rattled the dry thatch. I stirred restlessly and found both legs had gone to sleep.

That the Samoans are not without a sense of humour was proved by the perfect comedy relief in the next act. A loud commotion in the far corner of the place resulted in the appearance of two natives, dressed in torn Mother Hubbards, their faces black with soot and great red rings painted around their eyes, who tumbled in the arena, rolled on the mats, danced and fell down emitting horrible groans. Then several of the old men and women joined in, doing a stiff imitation of the original *Siva Siva*.

Sam moved over and warned me that we would have to dance whether we liked it or not. Before I could protest, women appeared with bottles of coconut oil and all hands off the *Hurricane* were stripped to the waist and vigorously rubbed until we shone like polished bronze. Bob and I were elected to go first. We did the best we could at interpretive Tahitian dances, feeling as clumsy and awkward as we no doubt looked, but the Samoans applauded. Next, Sam and Gerry jumped up and performed a wonderful parody on the *Siva Siva*. The natives shrieked with laughter and called them again and again until sheer exhaustion stopped their antics.

It was late when the party broke up and the four of us, stretched out in the dark quiet of the high chief's house, were given a massage—legs, arms, and back—by the *Siva Siva* girls until we dropped to sleep, with an exceedingly high

opinion of Samoan hospitality.

In the morning we yawned and stretched on our packs of soft pandanus sleeping mats, blinking at the low sun filtering through the grove. The southeast had begun to tussle with the palm fronds, promising a good passage to the westward, but the thunder of the breakers on the reef was ominously loud.

We bathed in fresh water and drank cups of strong hot chocolate from the crushed cocoa beans. I presented the chief with the box of trade goods and he promised us fruit for the voyage. Gerry and I strolled along the beach to have a look at the ship. The swell was high and I felt sorry for Hector rattling around in his bunk aboard; the *Hurricane* was practically looping the loop. The roar of the surf was so loud on the beach that I had to shout in Gerry's ear: "How are we ever going to get aboard?" His reply was drowned by a sea that sent us to a higher part of the beach as the sandy water swirled over our ankles.

Back in the village I consulted with Sam, who said that the natives had told him it could be done with one passenger only in a canoe and two paddlers. Sam interpreted our official farewell and we helped launch the canoes in the lee of the two high rocks that marked the narrow pass.

Just inside the cut, four canoes in line, we waited, surging in the wash, tense, watching the swells rush in, piling higher as the water shoaled until the top, translucent in the sun, spilled over; the wind, catching the crests, trailed seaward and a fine mist floated out over the roadstead. A moderate sea followed larger breakers. The natives shouted and, with paddles bending and muscles straining, the first two canoes in line shot out of the pass and climbed over the sea before it broke. Safe! They leisurely paddled toward the *Hurricane*.

I was last in line and Sam was just ahead. Wave after wave broke across the cut; walls of water eight feet high smashed against the rocks. The canoes were forced backward in the wash of a huge comber: then a lull, a shout, and the paddles dug in with swift powerful strokes. Accelerated by the backwash we rushed out between the rocks; but a giant wave came out of nowhere. Sam's canoe climbed the wall of water and slipped down the other side. Two boat lengths behind, my natives paddling furiously uttered a cry of dismay. It was too late. The sea, built up to an inverted wall, broke as the beak-shaped bow pointed skyward. I hung on to the sides as we went up until, with a roar of a waterfall, the sea turned the canoe over end for end. The water closed over my head and light was gone. I

was rushing shorewards, turning and rolling; then a sudden stop, and a dull pain spread over my back and legs. I struggled. Daylight again as my head bobbed above the white cascade. In one hand was a piece of the gunwale from the canoe that had been dashed with me against the rock. Desperately I tried to climb the steep, slippery side. Another wave was coming in. Seaward, I saw two black heads beyond the breakers. A shout, and a hand lifted out of the water, motioned me to swim out. Taking a quick breath, I dived beneath the next breaker, swam under water until I heard the muffled crash of the sea overhead; my knees scraped on the sharp coral bottom. Two more hard strokes and I came up behind the break. Bits of splintered black wood floated off the rock—all that remained of the hollow log canoe and outrigger. I noticed the stain of blood, diffused pink in the clear water around my head. My stomach was cold with fear at the thought of sharks. But two canoes were close by now and I crawled into the first one, pulling my legs after me with uncommon agility. I was bruised and cut by the sharp coral rock and I felt a lump on my forehead the size of an egg. The natives were concerned with the loss of a canoe, and my two caught plenty of Samoan hell for their miscalculation.

Aboard we made ready for sea: Hector dabbed me with iodine until I felt as if I had been stung by a hundred wasps; forward, all hands wrestled with the anchor, which was fouled in the coral. Heaving up short, the swell jerked her out and the breeze took us slowly offshore and we leisurely set all sail. I noticed the canoes were still hovering off the pass, waiting perhaps with more caution, as we ran off to the westward. Wallis Island, our next harbour two hundred miles to leeward, promised another lagoon; and we crowded the cockpit while Gerry read aloud from the pilot book. One's thoughts work ahead as soon as the dividers are spread on the chart and the course is laid, but Felialupo, beneath the uneven line of horizon, was not forgotten. And I realized that the night in the high chief's house was not just an incident, but a perspective of life at a high point in the great accident of nature—mysterious and complex, and yet as simple as a flower unfolding from a dead dusty seed.

The wind increased and the rigging was humming and the pipe turnbuckles whistling again; and Savaii was gone. . . . For almost a year we had been raising islands ahead and dropping them astern. Day after day, month after month, we had added degrees to the westward. Soon now we would subtract, for the one hundred and eightieth meridian was just ahead. Every sixty miles we would subtract one degree. And, as west longitude changes to east, so Polynesia gives way to Melanesia; straight hair changes to bushy mops; tall figures shrink;

features grow flatter; lips larger; *pareus* and *lava lavas* change to gee-strings and grass skirts; islands from healthy malaria-free dots to huge blocks of land, fever-ridden, overgrown with jungle, noisy with insects. Another world was just ahead, coming closer with the swish and crash of the bow and the suck and gurgle of the wake. One, two, and often three degrees each day, the western Pacific approached.



## Chapter XV

**THE Director,**” said Gerry, “has threatened us with a rum punch party. Do you feel well enough to go?”

“Yes, I’m comfortable as long as I keep this foot elevated,” I answered. “Is Hector going to bring the groceries off?”

“Yes, he’s with Sam.”

“Where’s Bob?”

“God knows. I left him at the Grand Pacific Hotel bar with the ‘King’s Navee.’ ”

“The nights are cool here. There is a difference in the air! I haven’t breathed anything like it since we left home.”

“We’re a long way down, Coppy, eighteen degrees south and it’s the first of July.”

“Remember a year ago Fourth of July?”

“Nicaragua, Bluefields, with Jose Penada and Belize gin.”

“Why do you keep a diary with a memory like that?”

“For my own edification.”

“... Gerry, the sun’s an hour past the yardarm; why don’t you build us a drink?”

“There’s no soda.”

“Plain water will do. There’s plenty of ice.”

Gerry ducked below and I gazed gratefully over the harbour. The sun was down below the dome and spire-topped mountains of Viti Levu and a native cutter with a long bowsprit, her sails black against the sunset, was slowly beating up

the harbour in the falling breeze. She might as well wait until after dark and work in with the land wind, I thought.... Gerry came up with whisky and water; the glasses were cloudy.

“Damn that Hector,” I said. “I told him to wash up with fresh water in port. I would like to be able to see through a glass, just for a change.”

Gerry sighed and flopped down in a deck chair. “Here he comes now. I hope he didn’t forget anything.”

“I’m hungry.”

“So am I.”

The breeze was dead and the sails on the little cutter drooped discouragingly. The *Director*, anchored hard by, cast an almost straight reflection down in the water, oily from the shipping and lurid with the afterglow of the sunset. A boat load of Fijian women, chattering like monkeys, drifted by; a man sculling.

“. . . Hi, Samuel!” The dinghy bumped alongside. “Hector! didn’t I tell you to wash the glasses in fresh water?”

“You no say me nozzing.”

“Why in the hell didn’t you do it?”

“Si, Capitan. I go for doing.”

“No, wait until after we eat.”

From across the water: “*Hurricane*, ahoy! Are you coming over?”

“Yea, after dinner,” I yelled.

“Bring some limes.”

“O.K.! . . . Drink, Sam?” I asked.

“Thanks, just a light one.”

“Hector! Bring up some ice.”

Below, the Primus stoves were roaring and the cabin lamps flooded the companionway with mellow light. From forward, down the decks, streaked the straight black shadows of the main rigging made by the riding light, still as a star, isolated on the invisible forestay, I was hungry; but, relaxing in the pleasant anticipation of a good dinner, with a drink cool in my hand, watched the riding lights of the small craft spotted dimly around the anchorage and the bright lights of Suva, cast red-yellow against the sky. The mail boat alongside the jetty was a blaze of brilliant lights, and a British cruiser, anchored far out, looked like a small city on the other side of the harbour.

“Come and get it, Coppy,” called Gerry from below; and I limped down the companionway.

Silently we ate on the small cabin table, the pressure lantern hissing overhead, until a whole roasted leg of lamb was almost demolished.

“I *had* planned,” said Gerry sadly, “to have cold meat tomorrow.”

After dinner I felt like sleeping but I was anxious to exchange gossip with the *Director*; we had not seen them since American Samoa. So we dropped into our dinghy and rowed across to the schooner.

“Hi, Skip,” called Bruce. “So you finally floated the old swamp scow into port.”

“And without lying awake nights listening to that *fu-fu* valve of yours pound,” I said.

“Did you bring the limes?”

“All we had.”

We clambered on board and Hey Hey trailed our skiff aft while Bruce dived below to mix a drink.

Rum, lime, and brown sugar with ice and water were passed around. They were cool and good and not too sweet; but the Tahitian rum gave me nostalgia for Papeete, and our passage through thirty degrees of longitude passed through my mind in a panorama of islands and faces.

“What kind of passage did you have?” asked Bruce.

“Plenty of wind for a change. We were ahead of schedule all the way. The first day out of Pango we ran a hundred and eighty miles to the end of Savaii, and the last hundred miles to Wallis Island we made in twelve hours flat. A hell of a wind. We hove to waiting for daylight and then when we saw the south pass it was a mass of breakers, so I sailed to leeward and worked in the west pass.”

“It really did blow,” said Bruce. “We were wind-bound in Wallis for a week.”

“You knew that we missed you there by an hour?”

“Yes, we heard you had sneaked in the back door just as we were sailing.”

“There’s a shore reef makes way out in that west bay and we couldn’t anchor closer than half a mile from the shore. It was a longish pull in the dinghy against the wind with the four of us. When we came up to the beach, we hesitated to land because the wildest looking lot o’ natives came out of the bush we had ever seen. They had chicken feathers in their hair and they were smeared all over with a kind of yellow powder, and they had big red blotches painted on their faces. The language is so similar to Samoan that Sam had no difficulty speaking with ’em, and we learned that you were anchored off the village on the other side.

“So we decided to walk across the island that afternoon, but it was a hell of a long walk, mud over your ankles and hot out of the wind. The hills are low but they’re steep and damn slippery. I think it took us about three hours. And just as we were coming down the last hill to the village we saw you sail out the east pass, making knots for Fiji.

“By that time it was too late to walk back and we were dead tired. The French Resident took pity on us and took us in, mud and all. We bathed and put on some of the Resident’s spare clothes, they hung on me like a sack; then we had drinks and plenty of food. His house, high as it is situated, catches plenty of breeze, and it was lovely and cool; we spent the night in the heaven of clean sheets.”

“How long did you stay in Wallis?”

“We moved the ship around the day after you left and stayed a week. We careened and put on a coat of much needed copper paint.

“It’s a dump, but the Resident is a good guy. So is his wireless operator, and you

remember Jones? I think the three white families on the island competed to see who could put on the best dinner. They were all swell, but I think Burns Philp's man won."

"Ray's prejudiced," said Gerry, "on account Jones set a bottle o' Scotch and a jug of water by his plate."

"Come on, *Hurricane*, bottoms up!"

"Cheerio, you blokes!"

"Where's Burrell?"

"It's hard to say. In Pango with only three or four beer joints, he was easy to find; but there are too many pubs in Suva. The night we got in, he could hardly wait to go ashore. We didn't anchor until about 3.00 a.m. and Bob stayed up the rest of the night, shaving, cleaning up, pressing his clothes and waiting for daylight, sniffing the town on the land breeze. Just after daylight he swallowed a cup of coffee and got Hector to take him ashore. ... I have scarcely seen him since."

"Did you stop at Futuna?" asked Denny.

"Yes. It was a beautiful spot, much better than Wallis. We acquired most of our good tapa there. . . . There are about two thousand natives and no white men excepting an old Catholic priest who has been there forever, and Tom May, the Burns Philp trader, with his wife and a kid about two years old. They were tickled to death to see us... no radio, and the only boat is a little steamer that calls about three times a year—the same one that makes Wallis Island.

"Tom May said that he hadn't spoken English with anyone for eighteen months. We lived with him three or four days, walked around the island, took about two rolls of film, and ate all we could hold. It really is a lovely spot. There's a damn good anchorage in easterly winds—just a little roll at high tide. But it's a lovely place. The Mays are there for three years at a stretch. We left a load of books and took some mail for him."

"We saw Futuna the day after we left Wallis, but it was late and we would have had to wait until daylight to anchor so we went on," said Bruce.

“Due to the Mays, it was a worthwhile stop. But that’s true anywhere. Even the most beautiful islands in the world aren’t particularly pleasant unless you like the people. We all get plenty of isolation at sea and the desert isle stuff loses its appeal. . . . Wallis Island was the same; you know there was really nothing there but four thousand dirty natives without a particularly interesting culture, unless one were an anthropologist; but because of trader Jones and the French administrator we had fun.”

“What he really means,” said Gerry, “is that cruising revolves around his stomach.”

“But, to Gerry,” I countered, “cruising revolves around a much less mentionable part of his anatomy.”

“Coppo, did you tell about your experience with the wireless operator at Wallis?” asked Gerry.

“No, and if you do I’ll tell about how you jibed the main in half a gale and damn near lost us a mast.”

Gerry ignored this and said, “If Sam hadn’t been able to speak French, Bob and Ray would have had a duel on their hands... . You remember the wireless operator, the little short Frenchman?”

“Yea, what’s his name?”

“I don’t remember. But Ray and Bob took the laundry ashore one evening and never showed up aboard until the next morning. They didn’t say where they had been. The wind was light and Ray said it was a good day to go to an island on the outer reef to careen in the lee, so we sailed over.

“The next day we came off at high tide and sailed back to our anchorage off the jetty and found the Frenchman sitting there on a piling, waving his arms and shouting. Ray said that maybe someone had sent him a cable. As soon as we fetched up on the chain, he came out in a canoe with two natives paddling as hard as they could and jumped on board and shook his finger under the skipper’s nose, and I guess told him off properly in French. Ray looked bewildered, not understanding more than two words; but Sam was laughing and acted as interpreter and peacemaker.”

“What had happened?”

“Well, the laundryman that Ray and Bob had contacted was also the island pimp.”

“It runs to laundrymen. Remember old chief Oswengo in Pango?” said Denny.

“But, this native,” continued Gerry, “gave them the usual come on and led them away down to a house at the far end of the village. . . . You go ahead, Coppy, I want to get some more ice for this drink.”

“Get me a little while you’re at it,” I said.

“And so. . . . Don’t hold us in suspense,” said Bruce.

“Well, it was dark as hell and all hands were asleep inside. But our guide wakes ’em up and motions us in.”

“I can imagine the rest. But where does the wireless operator come in?”

“But you can’t imagine the rest. We had our pockets full of trinkets we had been trading for tapa cloth that afternoon; and the two girls inside were really inspiring, young and tender. But, well-heeled as we were, we couldn’t buy their favours at any price, and yet, every time we started to leave, the pimp lurking outside in the dark motioned us back inside; and the girls invited us to lie down. And that, so help me, was all. Completely mystified, we finally gave up the struggle, went sound asleep, and didn’t wake up ’til daylight.”

“So what?”

“We were a little angry but couldn’t complain because we had a good night’s sleep and were only out a few cheap bracelets. I forgot the whole incident until we came back from careening, covered with sweat and paint, and were faced with an irate Frenchman who confessed that the house where we stayed was occupied by not only his number one but by his number two mistress. And, after accepting his invitation to dinner that very night, he thought it was a definite breach of hospitality to leave his table as soon as the last liqueur was down our throats and go out and deliberately seduce his private stuff.

“I told him, through Sam, exactly what had happened and gave him, at his

request, a description of the native who had led us to the private nest. With this, a great light of understanding dawned on his face and he explained that this native was an old enemy. I suspected it was the father of one of the girls, who, by this ruse, had attempted to make him the laughingstock of the island.

“I think he partially succeeded, but the funny part was that our friend, the Frenchman, was less worried about saving his face than he was about the possible competition, because he pulled out a handful of franc notes and offered to buy up our entire stock of trade goods. I dragged all our junk on deck and made a damned good sale, a hundred per cent, above cost, and we closed the deal with a drink around. He left happy, having bought out his only competition; and his last words were: ‘Don’t tell my wife.’ ”

“That,” laughed Bruce, “calls for another round.”

“Good ol’ Tahitian rum. Bruce, you mix a better drink than they do in Papeete’s fanciest bar.”

“Coppy, tell ’em about the stowaways and the native gendarme,” said Gerry.

“What was that?”

“Well, you know Wallis Island is one hundred per cent Catholic. That one big church on the lagoon looks like a medieval castle, and they are building another one on a hill.”

“Think of the work, shaping all that stone!”

“They keep the girls in a sort of convent school until they are big enough to crawl over the wall, and then they have wholesale marriages.”

“They have the same sort of thing in Futuna,” added Gerry.

“What did you do, raid the convent?” asked Denny.

“No, but just before we sailed one morning—it wasn’t quite daylight and all hands were asleep—I was awakened by a noise on deck. I woke up Gerry and we stuck our heads out of the companionway and saw two girls on deck hauling a third one out of the water. They were very young and their clothes were wet and they were shivering. We couldn’t make out what they wanted so I ducked



below to wake up Sam; but they followed me down, shucked off their clothes, wrung the water out of them, and crawled in the bunks to warm up.

“I lit the cabin lamp and went forward and got Sam out. Bob heard the word ‘girls’ and jumped out of his bunk with an alacrity never exhibited when he is called for his watch. Sam rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and started at the unexpected sight of three naked female forms in the cabin. He blushed out on deck, oriented himself on the sunrise and called back down, asking the girls what in the hell they were up to. They were running away, they said, and wanted us to take them to Fiji. They would hide aboard until we sailed.

“They were damn good looking kids and we were beginning to think it wasn’t such a bad idea. Bob had even started to lead one of them forward, when we heard a boat alongside and two native policemen stuck their faces down below and ordered the three of them on deck. With the sun just over the hills, they hauled the protesting girls ashore without a stitch of clothing. We yelled at the policemen and waved the wet clothing they had left behind over our heads; but, apparently, they didn’t understand because they continued shoreward with their screaming charges.

“I forgot that incident, too, until the administrator sent for us. Sam refused to go along or have any part of it, so I trudged up the hill alone with the ship’s honour at stake. With my very limited vocabulary of island French, I explained the situation; but heard that it had been reported that we had attempted to abduct Wallis Island women. There’s nothing like being accused of white slavery with not more than twenty-five words of French to use for one’s exoneration.

“Obviously, I didn’t do any too well. That afternoon was sailing day and the administrator had policemen guarding each end of the jetty and one planted aboard the boat. Can you beat it? And these girls, whom none of us had ever laid eyes on, swam out to the *Hurricane*; and it’s a damn good swim, three hundred yards at least!”

“How about another round?”

“One more, and then I must go aboard the lugger. Hospital tomorrow morning, first thing, to have this foot lanced again.”

“How in the hell did that infection get started?”

“I don’t know. Probably in Savaii when I spilled over in a canoe and got in the coral. But the swelling started in Futuna and it really hurt. I came in here in such pain that I had to lie flat on my back with my foot lashed to a port light over the bunk. Even after eating three morphine tablets, it still gave me hell.”

“That will take the joy out of cruising quicker than a toothache,” said Denny.

“If you run out of anything stronger, try dissolving aspirin tablets in neat gin; put down the hatch and you’ll temporarily forget your troubles.”

“To change the subject, where did you find that big bloody anchor I saw forward?” asked Denny.

“It’s not on board now; Gerry sold it.”

“I only got four pounds for it,” said Gerry.

“The damn thing weighed about four hundred and fifty pounds. It was one hell of a job to salvage because it was wound up in about four hundred feet of inch diameter steel cable.”

“But how did you find it?”

“Well, when we decided to go over and careen, all hands got on the windlass and all we could do was put the bow down a little. I started the engine and ran around on a slack chain, then wound her up short again; but we had only gained about two links. We worked and sweated. As the tide came in, the breeze picked up; and a little swell coming over the reef would lift the bow; and when she went down we got in about three or four inches with each surge. After about two hours of damn hot work pulling up the bottom of the lagoon, this monstrous anchor and fathoms and fathoms of cable and a huge block of coral broke the surface, riding on our own two-hundred-pound hook. The chain was wrapped around the big anchor and the cable was around our anchor like a snake. It was a hell of a mess.

“We unshackled the main and staysail halyards and eventually got the whole works, rock and all, on deck. We dragged the cable on the beach and coiled it down and sold it for two pounds to Jones for his lighters.”

“I wonder whose anchor it was?”

“That’s the funny part of it. We know. Because we happened to have a book on board called the *Wanderluster* by Bissell, and he mentioned losing his anchor there just eleven years ago the same month in a strong southeast: the cable broke close up on the drum and they damn near went ashore—just started the engine in time to keep off. I guess they spent days dragging and diving for it before they gave up; and then we come along eleven years later and drop our hook directly on top of their anchor.”

“The last man,” said Bruce, “doesn’t have a chance. I was going to mention something about our passage but there’s no use.

“Except,” said Denny, “the wind blew so strong in Wallis Island that when I stuck a marlinspike slowly out of the companionway the breeze levelled it off an inch at a time until only the stump was left in my hand.”

“Didn’t it even bend?” asked Gerry.

“No, the wind cut her off clean as with a hacksaw,” said Denny.

“You win.”

“It’s bedtime.”

“How about a nightcap?”

“No, thanks. I have my tonnage already.”

“Good night.”

“Thanks a lot.”

“See you in the morning.”

“Let’s plan to sail together. I mean leave here at the same minute.”

“We’ll be ready any time after the Fourth of July.”

“Suits us.”

“We’ll race to the Cannibal Islands.”

“It’s only a six-hundred-mile jump.”

“We can’t settle on a race, standing in a dinghy in the middle of the harbour; but I’ll meet you uptown in our favourite pub and we’ll talk it over in the proper fashion. *Buenas noches!*”

. . . . The light’s on in the galley. Hector is probably using up the new-coloured pencils I bought him,” I said to Gerry.

“He’s learning to read now. I think he understands about every third word,” said Gerry.

“The old hooker looks twice her size at night.”

“It really looms up.”

“There is something homelike about the lights showing through the ports and reflecting in the water; like a lighted window in a house reflecting on the snow.”

“I’m sleepy.”

“So am I. Here, you take the painter and hold her alongside; I’ll climb out next to the rigging.”

“Watch the oarlock.”

“May I give you a hand?”

“No, thanks.”

Below, Hector was drawing on the galley table. He gathered up his paper as I swung down the companionway ladder and proudly exhibited his work. “Esta un hombre. Esta una mujer. Mucho pelo, Capitan, mucho pelo.”

“Esta bueno, Hector,” I said. “Buenas noches.”

“Buenas noches, Capitan.”

“. . . Gerry, Suva is a good spot, but I’ll be glad to get out of town again.”

“I’m anxious to see the New Hebrides. I guess they’re about as wild as any place

on earth!”

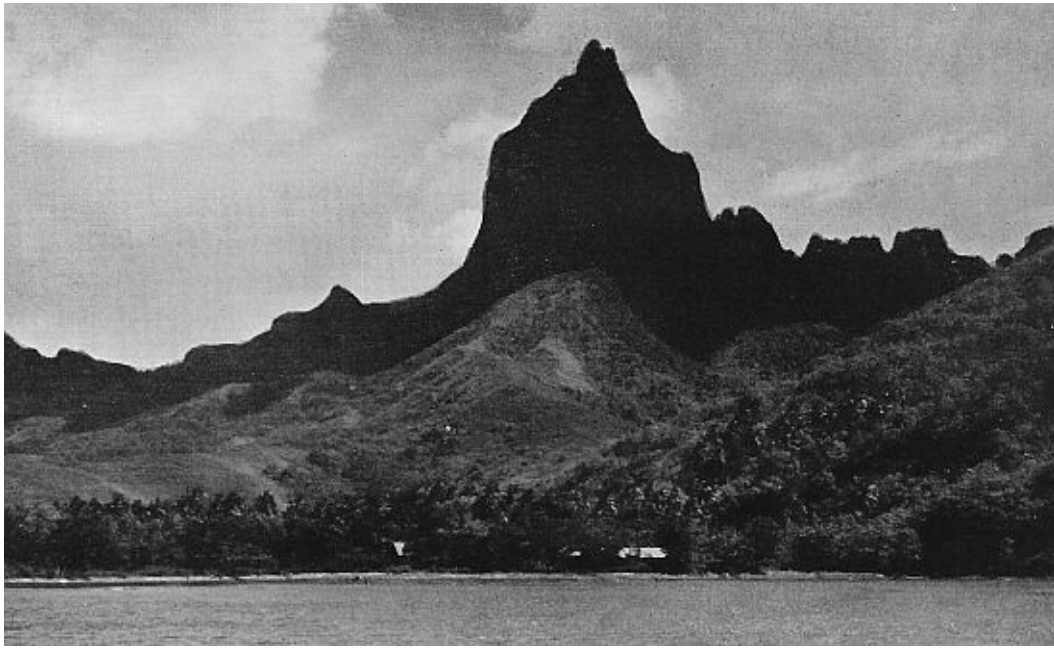
“God, it’s good to stretch out in a dead still boat on a cool night.”

“And we don’t have to get up and stare at a binnacle light for three hours.”

Hector turned down the galley lamp, blew over the chimney; and it was dark and quiet as a tomb.



*Tall palms lean out over the lagoon.*



*Changing shadows on Moorea's spire.*



*Penrhyn's pearl lagoon.*





*Making Kava on Wallace Island.*

## Chapter XVI

**HIGH UP** on a hill on little Iriki Island in Vila Harbour is the residence of His Britannic Majesty's Governor Joy of the condominium of the New Hebrides; just across a narrow strait on the mainland of Efate Island curves a collection of tin-roofed shacks along the coral beach, Port Vila, more intimately known by seafarers as "The hell hole of the Pacific." And so it is from the standpoint of health, climate, and women, the latter of which cause the French as much misery as the two former do the British. For there is a definite dearth of women or entertainment in Vila—only a few transplanted Tonkinese, their delicate figures and tiny hands and feet contrasting with the dull black faces, the heavy-limbed, ragged-clothed natives whose fathers were cannibals. Beyond the town, the backs of the hills are parched, but their faces turned to the trades are green; the lowlands are stifling green, and masses of mangrove, their roots like fingers, clutch the sea. Straight Norfolk pines, like totem poles, line the beach road and the tall palms inclining seaward dwarf the mangroves.

"There is nothing in Port Vila," any occasional tourist will remark who, straying from the paths of cruise ships, comes in on the little, black, low-sided Burns Philp steamer. Yes, there is little in Port Vila but heat nine months out of the year; but in the winter, June, July, and August, it is only warm. And yet I would like to go again to Vila—that is, if I knew the Joys still reigned from their hilltop on little Iriki Island; and if the Swiss merchant and his Gilbertese wife still operated their store and cafe; and if the port doctor, just up from Melbourne with his pretty wife, still tended the sick in the remotest corners of the black New Hebrides. For "the hell hole of the Pacific" was for us a haven of refuge from a southeast gale, and the kindness of the European families we knew, perhaps contrasted with the harsher surroundings of Melanesia, will not be forgotten. Yet there was nothing there but a safe anchorage, a few fresh vegetables, a cow and a cake. The latter two are important because they were timely gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Joy. . . .

Months later, dreamy from a Scotch and soda in a Brisbane pub, an Australian friend questioned me about the New Hebrides, and I regaled him with stories of jungle and cannibals and murders on Malekula Island to the northward.

“Fascinating, old chap,” he said. “I was in Port Vila years ago on the *Mirinda*.”

“A delightful place,” I said.

“What!” he exclaimed. “It’s a bloody awful spot.”

“I liked it,” I said, “because we acquired there a cow and a cake.”

“What has a cake and a mangy old cow to do with Port Vila?” he asked.

“It wasn’t a mangy old cow: it was young, tender, and sleekhaired with eyes as soft as a deer’s; and, my friend, a cow is the noblest of all beasts.”

“Nonsense!”

“A cow,” I continued, “provides the most sought after luxuries of life. . . .”

“Bosh! Aren’t you a bit foggy?”

“True,” I said, “but so is my statement about the cow. Besides providing the roast beef of dear old England, think of the milk and cheese, the shoe leather and tripe. So, you see, a cow is symbolic of plenty.”

“And what about the cake?” he asked.

“The cake,” I said, “is symbolic of kindness.”

“The bakeries in Brisbane are full of kind cakes, also cakes of all kinds. Bar snacks for me!” he said, reaching for a plate of sardines on strips of toast. “You can’t eat sweets with whisky.”

“Yes, but this was a special cake given to us by the Governor’s wife. It was a luscious chocolate cake and it reminded me of home,” I said earnestly.

“I didn’t know you Yankees were sentimental,” he said, and ordered another round of drinks.

“We aren’t,” I laughed, “but we do get hungry. Try going to sea once and you will then adjust your scale of values so that a cow and cake will appear in their proper perspective.”

... It was late afternoon on the ninth of July when we sailed out of Suva's harbour, Port Vila bound. Sam, a forlorn figure on the jetty, had waved goodbye; he was going home after three years in the islands. The excitement of the race with the *Director* was tempered by the disappointment of losing Sam; even Hector, usually happier with one less dish to wash, was sad. We had cast off the lines with final instruction to Sam to call on our respective families at home; and down the harbour we sailed to where the sea ran in between the reefs.

With the *Hurricane* just ahead, we trimmed by the wind to sail south through the pass, heeling to the moderate trades. Anxiously I watched the set of each sail, but the *Director* close astern was coming closer; then she was abeam as both ships dipped to the sea outside; then she was ahead, just ahead, and I moved over to leeward and looked under the main boom to see the set of the headsails and, reassured by the taut curves, made a futile gesture by trimming in the mizzen just an inch. But Denny, dangling a rope end over *Director's* stern, waved a cheery farewell while we sadly watched her slice through the seas just ahead, breaking our trail southward.

"Wait until we square off," I thought as the distance widened between the ships. But a fine weather sunset, as gold as a polished coin, found us a good mile behind; and after dark the white fight hung aft in the *Director's* rigging bobbed tantalizingly against the black horizon.

"We're down by the stern," I said. "With a full load of gasoline and water and all the groceries we bought there must be at least three extra tons, and she feels as if she's dragging."

"Corry, let your worries be over, because the way you consume groceries at sea I think you will soon eat us into trim," said Gerry.

Sometime after midnight I was awakened by Hector's hushed voice. "Capitan! yo vista loos."

I scrambled on deck, and sure enough a light abaft of beam; somehow we had slipped by the *Director*. But I noticed the weather was lighter and every star showed in a cloudless sky, and I went to sleep again worried by the wind. And in the morning, with a bright orange sunrise, I was called on deck by the banging of tackle and slatting of canvas.

Gerry, on watch, said, "Corry, there's not enough breeze to blow the stink

overboard.”

I tightened the preventer tackles and took in the jib that was flagging itself to death on the forestay and pointed aft; the *Director* was about two miles astern. Soon it was glassy calm and hotter than hell, and we rolled and pitched and swore. The *Director*, with heavier gear, rolled and pitched and probably swore herself along faster than the *Hurricane*, because by noon we were almost side by side. Our main was down and the awning set and the mizzen and staysail sheeted in flat, and from across the water we could hear the creak and groan of the *Director's* gaffs.

“What do they call it,” I asked Gerry, “when two ships meet at sea and talk things over?”

“A gam,” said Gerry.

“We’ll have one,” said I. “Wake up Mexico and we’ll launch the dinghy.”

We did; and Gerry and I rowed up and down mountains of blue, ten thousand feet above the nearest land. Midway between the ships, first the *Hurricane* and then the *Director* would disappear in the trough of a sea and only the spars would show, canting dizzily one way and then the other. Like two boys on a teeter-totter behind a low wall, the ships alternately rose and fell.

As we came alongside, the *Director's* parrot squawked a welcome. Once aboard, we discussed the weather and reached the optimistic conclusion that because the sea stayed high, the calm would be of short duration. Gerry, the *Hurricane's* best baker, had hot bread in the oven and we asked the *Director's* crew aboard for tea.

Back aboard our ship, we sat on the deck-house, braced our feet on the rail and balanced full cups of strong tea, and ate hot bread and jam while the perspiration dripped off our noses.

“Denny,” I said, “we’re going to have some wind. Look to the southeast!”

A long low line of clouds like distant mountains stretched from south to east and slowly, while we watched, rose higher in the sky.

“Although I have no faith in the weather lore of corn-belt sailors,” said Bruce, “I think we’ll get back aboard before our boy, Hey Hey, takes off by himself.”

“We’ll see you in Port Vila,” I shouted, and we took in the awning, for the water was dark to windward.

The clouds were high and not a solid mass; but, broken into ranks, they marched across the sky and the wind came fresh out of the south-east and off to the westward raced both ships. But again the *Director* left us behind, and in the morning we had the sea to ourselves; not even from the mainmast were our rivals visible, so we settled down to the routine of watching, eating, and sleeping. The weather was fresh and becoming fresher, and the ship was playing her passage-making tune of shrieks, hums, whines, and whistles; the lee wake crashed out mottled with foam; she tossed her tail in the air and her bow ploughed up a curved stream of white water; eight knots she sang along to the westward.

Then the wind backed to the south and, one afternoon, blew hard, and under full sail we made nine and a half knots.

“It’s as fast,” I said, “as the old girl will sail.” The wind increased more and a high white haze spread over the sky, but she was buried too deep under the press of canvas and slowed down. With a tackle on the helm, I was straining, feet braced; she was staggering a little and I called all hands to shorten down, but before a halyard was touched the tiller handle, stout oak, broke off in my hands and the jib blew out of the bolt ropes. She leapt to windward and shook all over and white water boiled over the deck. Quickly we trimmed in the main and the mizzen, then backed the staysail, and she lay hove to, steady as a rock. In a half hour we had drilled and fitted on the spare tiller, bent on a storm jib, tucked two reefs in the mainsail, and squared off to the westward. She was easy to steer again and she whistled and whined her eight-knot tune.

“The race,” I said, “is over. We’ll make a landfall in our own quiet way and pay off the bets when we get in, which is better than not getting to port at all.”

“True enough, old man,” said Gerry. He added, as he watched the ocean fly by, “But we’re not slowed down.”

All night we drove our fourteen-foot wedge through sea after sea. The haze overhead was grey as slate and in the morning we had a gale on our hands and rain aplenty. We took in the mizzen to ease the helm and lessen the chance of a jibe; and the merry passage-making tune gave way to the loud crescendo of a

gale with the roar and crash of sea drowning out all but the shriek of the wind in the rigging aloft. Soaking wet, we shivered through the long watch; our hands wrinkled from the water, and blue with cold, we could scarcely unbutton our jackets or hold a cup of chocolate kept hot on the galley stove.

We had a feeling of alertness, not of danger, because danger was not there, and we stamped our feet, swung our arms, and sang on watch as we plunged down into each black abyss. Everywhere the sea broke in a flurry of cold white-green sparks and the raindrops bounced on the water. Seas crashed under the stern, smothering the quarter, and downhill we went in a breath-taking rush until over the bowsprit a long hill of black water rose, then disappeared in the night ahead. In the trough of the sea it was calm on deck, but on the crest the full force of the wind blew water from the sea-tops across the ship, and once filled the cockpit. The drain was partially plugged and most of the night the water, warmer than wind and rain, sloshed around our legs. It was like standing in an outdoor bathtub in the rain during an earthquake.

In the fury of a midnight squall, Gerry came balancing slowly on deck, warm and dry from his bunk, to take his watch. A sea thundering against the quarter broke sky high and gallons and gallons of salt water found its way down the companionway and into Hector's bunk, soaking us and again filling the only partially drained cockpit. Mexican profanity mingled with American, but the words blown out of our mouths were carried to leeward at more than fifty miles an hour. We looked like drowned rats with our hair plastered down over our faces; and, regarding each other, laughed.

"Why did we ever leave Ioway?" asked Gerry.

"It's your turn to worry and mine to be dry," I answered, and went below and rubbed down with the last dry towel aboard.

If the rain lifted we would see land at daylight. I had stayed to the southward to keep well off the island and pegged our run from noon off on the chart. By daylight we would be off the harbour entrance and we would stand in towards the steep shore. A lighthouse was marked on the point by the entrance, but I doubted if she would show through the muck. I knew we were well offshore, perhaps too far, but safe; and I turned down the cabin lamp and went to sleep; the bilge water sloshed and the gale whined aloft.

Bob woke me at six and said that it was still as thick as pea soup but the wind had moderated. I called all hands on deck and we jibed the ship and stood boldly in for the land. The wind backed more to the eastward. It cleared a little and land showed ahead, an unidentifiable point. The rain ceased and the wind lulled, then suddenly increased. It was clear to windward, but a fine of white advanced on the water and the gale came back blowing water out of the sea. The masts leaned and the rigging groaned and she fell away to the northwest. The grey scud was blown from the sky and the land stood bold ahead, and a definite point bore north and on it an iron framework tower, Pango Point light, the entrance to Meli Bay and Vila Harbour. North we sailed in a whole gale but northwest we made. We trimmed in the sheets as much as we could, three hands barely moved the staysail, and I pointed up as much as possible until we sailed northeast; but northwest we made and the lighthouse on the point grew farther and farther away. If we could just make the lee of that point, the rest would be easy. I set a reefed mizzen and we made more fuss in the water, but off to the westward we went in the wind and current. In desperation I started the engine and we made still more commotion in the water but could not make an inch of easting; the seas were too steep and the wind too strong.

“It’s no use,” I yelled, “We’re just not big enough. Slack off!”

Down wind we raced again. The sky was clear and the sun bright and we could just see the town of Vila at the head of the bay. We were sick with the same thought: the *Director*. Good time the *Hurricane* had made, and if only we had made a little less time we would not have gone just two miles too far to the west. If it had cleared a quarter of an hour earlier, we could have slipped in around the point and, staying close to the windward shore, made port in smooth water. The race was gone with our jib.

A still ship, I thought, would be heaven, and I picked out a deserted land-locked anchorage on the west side of Efate Island. Quickly we rounded the last point of land, Devils Point, and slipped into the lee. By afternoon we anchored close to shore in Havannah Harbour, fifteen miles from town, and the boat was quiet and the sun’s warmth welcome. Dead tired, all hands slept the clock around while the gale blew itself out over the hills and the *Hurricane* tugged at her chain.

It wasn’t until the third day after being blown past the harbour that we entered the ship officially in Port Vila, New Hebrides, dropped our hook and salaamed the *Director*. But when we checked log books we found that we were actually



two hours ahead of our rivals at fatal Pango Point.

In Port Vila we lost our shipmate, Bob. When I went for our mail there was quite a handful of letters from Tahiti for Bob, which proved his undoing. His lucid moments in port were so few that I never discovered directly from him why he so suddenly decided to leave. One day he moved aboard the *Ville d'Amiens* bound from New Caledonia to his isle of desire, leaving behind an assortment of literature, one ship's clock, various guns, and a feeling of sadness with the remaining crew. Bob was good company and an able hand.

Reduced to the original ship's company again, we went soberly about the routine work of repairing the jib, stocking fresh provisions and making ready for sea.

Meat was always a problem; although there was plenty of tinned beef aboard, the sight of a can was becoming nauseating and our ingenuity on methods of preparation was exhausted. We took our troubles ashore and the cow vaguely formulated in our minds one night over a brandy and coffee with our friend, M. du Pertuis, the Swiss merchant, who cruelly, in this land of very little, elaborated on various recipes for preparing meat: boiling ham in beer before roasting, and the more subtle French method of injecting various liqueurs into the ham. Our mouths watered. Then we discussed beef, and I told of the roast prime ribs of old Ioway, cooked so rare that the blood climbed up the tongs of a carving fork. By this time, we were drooling; but du Pertuis suggested a method of preserving meat so that it could be easily freshened.

He wrote down the recipe and next day we called the *Director* into a conference, and under the guidance of du Pertuis produced a fifty-gallon oil drum, a sack of saltpeter, and plenty of ordinary salt. The results would be divided between the two ships. As there was no dearth of cattle in Efate Island, we cast around for a medium-sized cow.

One afternoon all hands, complete with white clothes, our feet painfully warped into shoes, were assembled at the Residency for tea, and during the conversation mentioned our ambitions for a cow. Mr. Joy said that he would have an animal driven to the beach the next day and killed.

The morning dawned to the tune of sharpening knives and all hands gathered around the scene of slaughter and, when the woeful eyes were glazed in death, fell upon the cow, stretched out in the sand under a cloud of flies, with all the

ships' cutlery combined, and made a quick but crude job of butchery. The meat was cooked for twenty minutes in the oil drum, scalded clean, and then put down in a mild salt and saltpeter solution. As long as the meat was covered with the liquid it would not spoil. It was a noble experiment, but it failed as a substitute for fresh meat or even tinned beef; and, contrary to M. du Pertuis' predictions, it was as salty as the Dead Sea. So back to the can opener we went. I think some of the less fortunate Queenslanders on the lower reaches of the Brisbane River may yet be chewing on pieces of this meat that we gave away to the shipyard proprietor when the *Hurricane* was there on the slip.

But M. du Pertuis was forgiven because of the letters of introduction he gave us to planters in the northern part of the group, which were useful, and his information about the North New Hebrides was accurate. We bought stick tobacco, bush knives, and mirrors for trade, which we were destined not to use; and, with friendly advice from Mr. Joy to stay out of the bush and be prudent when dealing with the natives, we sailed two days later than the *Director* for Bushman's Bay on Malekula with clearance papers for the Solomon Islands. . . .

For five hundred miles of latitude the New Hebrides, forty mountainous islands hiding a population of sixty thousand natives, stretch across the trades. Away to the south of Port Vila, Mt. Yasowa on Tanna Island, an active volcano perpetually reddening the sky, occasionally blows its top, and at night for a hundred miles and more ships may check their reckoning on this South Pacific's biggest beacon; its fiery reflection is the mark of the black New Hebrides, symbolizing savagery.

The natives, a residue of the great migration to the eastern Pacific, warped by an environment of dense fever-ridden jungle, flaming volcanoes, and the very uncertainty of the land itself, were moulded to a life of fear, distrust, and superstition, resulting in warfare and cannibalism. Disease, spears, poisoned arrows, and firearms (introduced by traders) take their daily toll of life. The only comparison to the depth of savagery is the height of civilization. Warfare and persecution are the inevitable results. Cannibalism is only a freak caused by the absence of mammalian life on the New Hebrides. Wherever there is a struggle for existence, *the fundamental law* shows no sign of modification.

Yet, from the same root stock as the friendly Tahitians came these Melanesians with their eyes, the black soul of savagery, and their woolly skulls elongated from the binding of their heads when children. They are both human beings as

the wolf and the Irish setter are both canines; but the Polynesian was domesticated by his land of plenty, his gem-like islands within their ring of surf, the lagoons teeming with fish, the nodding palms and the steady east wind. . . .

North through the group we sailed past dense jungles and huge extinct volcanic cones, some smothered in green to their summits, others more recent showed their naked brown faces above the sea of green. All day we sailed among the islands; and all night in light weather, the long sea broken by the windward islands, we traced our tiny trail of phosphorescent sparks north to the cannibal country. And the next day we skirted the western shore of Malekula past bays, headlands, and deep valleys; but not a house or a canoe or a sign of life did we see. Only an occasional thread of smoke rose out of the green and floated to the eastward, indicating a possible village.

The fringing reef was white in the freshening midday breeze; Bushman's Bay opened up and the friendly spars on the *Director* nodded in the slight ground swell inside. A house showed through the jungle and straight rows of planted coconuts marched from the sea up into the hills. We sailed in between the reefs, rounded up, and anchored close by the *Director*; not realizing that it would be the last time these two ships would ever ride together.

The course of human endeavour is as unpredictable as high latitude weather, and the course of the *Hurricane* was abruptly changed by the smallest living organism. Directly in the centre of my starboard quarter, a boil (a joke in Vila) had flamed into a huge abscess, seven inches in diameter, and I was paralysed with pain. The infection in my foot had flared up again and I was prone on my stomach, unable to move. Cruising was becoming as grim as Malekula's hinterland. The joy had gone out of it and I kept silent by drinking aspirin tablets dissolved in cheap French wine.

A consultation was called with the *Director*, and Mr. Collette, the planter of Bushman's Bay, came off to our ship. He informed us that the next day the inter-island steamer, *Mirani*, would sail past the bay and would anchor for the night around a headland to the northward. There had been some trouble with the natives, a murder or two. . . . Fortunately, the port doctor would be aboard.

So for another long day I lay on deck, watching the black shingle beach that blocked a stream of dirty water at the head of the bay, where thirty years ago an entire white family of five had been massacred by the natives. They had been

friends and neighbours of Collette's, and the memory was indelibly stamped in his mind. It was not an uncommon occurrence in the early days of the New Hebrides, and I could not but reconstruct the cold fear and desperate fighting of the man and his wife in that little house by the creek while the three children watched, wide-eyed from stark terror. The futile shooting from the windows and the savage cries without as the black naked bodies moved closer. The inevitable firing of the house and then the circle of death closed in, spears were buried in soft white flesh and heavy clubs thudded against the unprotected bodies. In the light of the burning house, the lifeless bodies, stripped of clothing, oozing blood and brains, were lashed by their feet to a long pole and carried up the jungle to the village, their heads swinging like pendulums with each swift step of the native carriers. And then the smell of burning, searing flesh. . . .

It wasn't a pleasant thought. Many a ship has been cut off in remote New Hebridean bays and the crews never lived to tell the story, only the charred hull still smoking on the sand bore mute testimony of the slaughter, and human bones under a swarm of ants were evidence of the feast.

But black was not all on one side, excepting for colour; for many of the early traders were no saints and did a bit of slaughtering themselves, and the crime of blackbirding was practiced there unchecked for half a century. Many a New Hebridean bush boy has left his bones in the cane fields of North Queensland, and even on the Guano Islands off Chile, along with their Polynesian cousins. Labour recruiting for the local plantations is still practised fairly by the British, but the French gambol about the fringe of the condominium law under the quiet eyes of His Majesty's watchdog; and trouble still brews in the hidden villages in the interior on several of the islands.

The missions have been a help, and full credit is due to the early missionaries who risked and often gave their lives to quell cannibalism and establish peace among the tribes. Now most of the coastline and the off-lying islands are inhabited by friendly natives, the salt water boys. In Malekula they live on a little island scarcely a half mile off shore; and, in crude outrigger canoes often-equipped with mat sails, go to the mainland during the day to work in their gardens and cultivate their yams. But when the sun sinks behind the hills they beat a hasty retreat to the protection of their own islands, because at night the Bushmen steal down to the beach and any stragglers are caught and eaten. It is a perpetual game, day and night without rest or truce, and death is the penalty for any violation of rules.

Only from the deck of the *Hurricane* was I destined to see the New Hebrides. I could only watch the wash on the black shingle and the smoke from an inland village floating blue-grey above the sea of green. I was sick and longed for civilization, cool weather, white beds, and fresh foods; but the nearest civilization was Australia: Brisbane, twelve hundred miles southwest. It would be winter there and heavy weather could be expected. I hated to go short-handed, but go I knew we must, for the bug was taking charge and my back was erupting like fiery Mt. Yasowa on Tanna Island, two hundred miles to the south. The zest for cruising was gone.

In the morning the trades blowing into Bushman's Bay brought the thumping sound of a propeller and clank of ancient pistons. Under a column of smoke as dark and voluminous as a waterspout, the old black *Mirani* throbbed by at six knots. Here was relief at last. One of the men on the *Director*, Lewis Hershon, who had joined that ship in Tahiti, volunteered to go along and give us a hand to Australia. He also longed for civilization but for a different reason: when he had joined the *Director* he had sent his girl to Paris and, like Bob, Tahiti would not work out of his blood. "From Brisbane," he said, "I could board a plane and fly to France." So he moved his gear aboard and we sailed after the little black steamer to see the doctor when she anchored around the headland to the northward.

In the late afternoon we came alongside the *Mirani* and stocky Captain Williams, with a broad Scotch accent, asked us gruffly what our business was. When he learned, he said that the doctor was ashore but would soon be back, and then he came aboard to help me over the high side of his ship. Just before dark the doctor arrived and said he would have to cut her open. I was dizzy with fever but relaxed from a shot in the arm when they stretched me out on the *Hurricane's* red bunk cover laid over the tops of several kerosene cases and the supercargo's desk. The doctor's young wife sprayed ethyl chloride over a rag and said, "Just take slow deep breaths. ..."

The next thing I knew I was struggling; then the fog lifted and I looked around at the familiar faces.

"The operation," laughed Gerry, "was a success; but, Coppy, the language was awful! But the doctor made a Christian out of you.

"How do you mean?"

“Wait until you see the cross he carved on your stern.”

A native entered and a satiny black arm thrust a cup of tea under my nose and all hands filed out.

“Lie quietly and I’ll look in on you after dinner,” admonished the doctor, and closed the door, shutting out the sound of the auxiliaries.

Alone in the supercargo’s office, I sipped tea with an infinite feeling of relief; the painful pressure was gone. It was warm and quiet and I heard a steady dripping on the iron floor. Even the auxiliaries vibrated the ship. The old tub must be awful in seaway, I thought. She probably leaks like a sieve in heavy weather. What could that dripping noise be? I counted the steady drops and almost fell asleep; but the sound was close and curiosity kept me awake. I looked over my shoulder and found I was covered up with the red blanket. Drop, drop, drop! I looked at the iron floor and saw a pool of blood spreading slowly over the plates and a red stream trickling down the corner of a kerosene case. I shouted in alarm and two of the native crew entered the cabin. “Look!” I pointed. They went for the doctor, who arrived in a minute with Captain Williams. A haemorrhage had developed and all the cotton wool and gauze aboard the ship was commandeered. The incisions were packed, but it was over an hour before that trickle of blood was stopped. I would spend the night aboard and next morning they would put me ashore at a French hospital in Segond Channel, a day’s sail to the northward; Gerry and Lewis would meet me there in the *Hurricane*. The native crew, naked from the waist up, carried me gently down to a stateroom and I fell asleep in a clean, cool bunk as the old *Mirani* got underway.

In the morning we sailed between the narrow green walls of Segond Channel and anchored off the settlement. A boat was launched from the davits, a cargo sling smelling of boxes and bales closed its rope web over the stretcher, and I had the delectable sensation of being picked up off the deck by the boom then swung high over the water and lowered gently into the waiting boat below. Six of the native crew carried me carefully up the steep bank to the hospital. It is incredible, I thought, as I watched the kindly black faces, what one generation of domestication will accomplish. The little French doctor, after prodding and squeezing, re-dressed the wound, telling me to return tomorrow.

By noon the *Hurricane* came in and I moved aboard. Captain Williams had

loaned us charts of the Australian coast, and we sailed around the bend to Port Latour, a Seventh Day Adventist mission, where we could slip the *Hurricane* and try to locate a leak that was keeping us busier every day at the pump, before taking the long track southwest across the coral sea. A chain was made fast to her bit, and when the tide was in and the cradles slipped under her keel the mission school was dismissed; and with fifty hands on the fall of a block and tackle, the *Hurricane* crept ashore, thrusting her spars among the palm fronds. With such a supply of ready man-power there was little need for machinery in Port Latour.

Three Australian Seventh Day Adventists ran the show, working hard on Sundays but knocking off on Saturdays. They neither drank, smoked, nor ate meat; but they were helpful and considerate, teaching the natives arithmetic so that they would not be cheated by the unscrupulous French planters (theoretically the British never cheat). But the Adventists were doing a good piece of work, faithfully guarding the health of their converts, and teaching them to become skilled labourers. On Saturday they gathered in the white church in the pasture where the cows were grazed for milk only; and in pidgin English they were told that “Heaven was one good fella place,” and “God, he one good fella.” Before the piano (called “box, you fight ’em teeth belong him he cry out”) they chanted their prayers so their souls would rise above the well-tended acres of coconut palms.

Each morning I borrowed the little mission launch and chugged around the point to the hospital at Second Channel: my infections were healing and I could limp around unassisted. In a few days we would be ready for sea, but the leak had not been found. Every seam was as tight as when she was built, every outlet was checked, but the mysterious leak defied all our ingenuity; and, when we slid into the water again, three hundred strokes a day on the brass bilge pump were our morning setting-up exercises to keep her dry.

Well over a year we had been in the tropics and the desire for temperate zones was as definite as the lure of the tropics had been when building the ship on Mississippi Sound. With four men aboard we could keep her afloat without hardship. It was August and trades outside would be fresh. The *Hurricane* would go to town twelve hundred miles to the upside-down continent. From landlocked Port Latour, we sailed into the narrow straits and with a four-knot fair tide outran the light east wind.

Close to the south shore was a white spot against the green, the *Director* bound for the Solomon Islands had anchored off a lonely plantation on Malekula's northern shore. By the edge of the fringing reef over a luxuriant growth of coral, magnified by the transparent water, we coasted in the tide with the sails scarcely filling. The *Director* was close by and Bruce, Sheridan, and Denny lined the stern. Drifting past her counter we waved and shouted good-bye. For six months our course had been the same. In a month we would be three thousand miles apart. Friends in port and rivals at sea, we had not been alone since Tahiti; and, although we planned to meet in the East Indies, we never saw the *Director* again. But two years later, one September night, we met her crew in New York City and the tales of the two ships were exchanged.

We rounded a point of land, the wind increased, the wake gurgled a little, and we stood out to sea for Australia. The mountains of the New Hebrides squatted down in the water, then separated into individual islands and disappeared with the sun.





*Sailing inside the lagoon; to windward the sea thunders on the coral barrier between Raiatea and Tahaa.*



*This man has tasted human flesh - New Hebrides.*

## Chapter XVII

**THE** steady southeast wind grew cooler, until we no longer hunted the scanty midday shade but stretched out on deck in the patches of sunlight, for our latitude was changing and it was winter time “down under.” Sweaters and jackets, smelling musty from mould, were freshened in the sun and blankets shaken out and spread on the bunks. Each day the barometer was higher, the temperature lower, and the crosses on the pencilled line across the chart stretched out from one hundred and fifty to a hundred and seventy miles. With the steady pressure of the wind abeam, the *Hurricane* was reaching faster than she could run: heeling over two strakes of planking from her rail she crashed out her lee wake in a white lacy pattern on the dark blue as regularly as each sea passed under the keel. The wind was the same in both force and direction for five days, driving us eight hundred miles across the Coral Sea, and the gimbal cabin lamp scarcely changed its angle across the bulkhead. But higher and higher rose the barometer and all the clouds went out of the sky. Cooler and crisper was the air, and sharper and keener our appetites. Our lethargy of the tropics was gone and our sights were set ahead one hundred and sixty miles a day. Gulls hovered over the wake and terns squawked at the wind flag on the masthead. A great line of reef to windward, the Chesterfields, broke the long Pacific swell, and the water was like a windy lagoon. The breeze, fresh enough to sing a steady seven-knot tune through the rigging but not too strong for comfort, was a good omen for the changed course; the gods were sending the *Hurricane* to Australia with tailor-made weather.

Just three more days would see us anchored in the city of Brisbane, and all hands were busy overhauling shore clothes that had not been worn since the ship was built. Leather shoes were scraped of mildew and polished, cockroaches were shaken out of socks and shirts, and wrinkled neckties were carefully pressed on the cabin table. “It won’t be long,” we sang, and danced with excitement. The *Hurricane* was going to town. Lewis Hershon, whom we had transshipped from the *Director*, had been in Australia before; and during the day he whetted our appetites with stories of the upside-down continent.

“The day after the day after tomorrow,” he said, “I’ll take you to a hotel and we’ll all have a hot bath and a drink and then I’ll buy you the best dinner you

have ever eaten. We'll start with oysters, brown bread, and stout. The oysters are better in Australia than anywhere in the world. Then we'll have prawns or lobster; a mixed grill with steak, chops, and kidneys; crisp lettuce; and fresh strawberries in cream!"

"Hush!" we shouted as we soaked a stringy piece of pickled New Hebridean cow and boiled up two cups of rice.

But in the morning the sheet blocks banged on deck and the cabin lamp cut a lesser angle across the bulkhead; the wind was dying with the sunrise. We had crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and sailed out of the trades.

"Cheer up, Lewis, it may still be the day after the day after tomorrow," I said, unconvincingly, for the barometer was very high and the sun had come directly out of the sea without a cloud across its burnished face. In a feeble easterly breeze we slopped along southwest.

Our navigation and reckoning placed us just five miles from Kenn Reef, one of the many isolated patches of landless coral rings, lines, and horseshoes that reach from New Guinea to New Zealand; that is, if our chronometer was right. And it was, to the second, for the position was no sooner laid down on the chart when the lookout aloft shouted: "Breakers ahead!" Little peaks of white water were bobbing up on the horizon line. Soon the breakers were visible from the deck, and beyond was an immense sheet of smooth water. The chart showed an anchorage behind this coral wall, protected from all weather except from west through north. This strange lake in mid-ocean was fascinating and Australia faded into the distance.

"We'll anchor," I said, "and catch some fish and leave when the wind comes back."

We sailed west in through a wide pass, then steered south in the smooth green water with a look aloft to keep us clear of the fatal brown patches that mottled the lagoon, coral heads near the surface, and the white patch of sand too shoal to clear. We passed over areas as dark blue as the sea outside, too deep to anchor, then banks of light blue where the bottom was clearly visible ten fathoms down, then on to a ledge of dark leaf green where fish flashed under the ship. Light green: "Six fathoms coral and sand!" Bottle green: "Three and a half!"

"Let her go!"

The anchor plunged down into the translucent water of a lake in the middle of the sea, and the ship was suspended motionless twenty feet over a marine garden of sea fans and intricate growths of coral. The reef awash extended north and west and we were anchored in the elbow where a little sand islet flashed white in the sun. It was the only land for hundreds of miles and was made by the sea eroding the outside of the reef and depositing the broken bits of coral inside the barrier until it was built up beyond the tide, ground fine by the wash of the surf and bleached white by the sun. Hector rigged a hand line and we had a large fish aboard a minute after the baited hook had reached the water, then another, but the third time the line snapped and a swirl of water eddied under the counter as a huge shark took fish, hook, and tackle. Hector had the light of battle in his eyes and he rigged our big shark hook with a chain leader to a quarter-inch diameter line and tossed it, baited with a fish's head, over the stern. A shark, longer than the dinghy, leisurely swallowed the hook and started off to the westward. The line slipped through our hands until they burned. We took a turn around the mast and the line smoked, and we took another turn, and then it broke.

"Well, that's that," I said, looking at a raw red streak across the palm of my hand. "Let's go ashore."

The dinghy was tossed over the side and we rowed across the shallow water to the little islet. But, before the boat had scraped on the sand, our landing was protested by the raucous screaming of thousands of birds, and the top of the islet rose in the air and wheeled overhead. White gulls and sooty terns nested there, huge gannets bravely guarded their downy young; and the warm musty smell from the birds mingled with the fishy smell of the reef. The islet was only six feet above high tide and less than two hundred feet long. To the south and east, where the sea thundered on the reef, were the scanty remains of old sailing ships. A huge iron-studded timber was imbedded in the sand, bits of copper were strewn around the islet and, on the outer reef, the stocks of two large anchors marked the spot like beacons. A chain, overgrown with coral, twisted through a shallow pool like a dead sea serpent. There was nothing else but the sea and the reef and this little dot of dry sand under a cloud of birds. I looked back over the lagoon and was reassured by the sight of the *Hurricane*.

We bathed in the shallow water, too cold for comfort, and rowed back aboard with a few dozen sea-fowl eggs. It was glassy calm by sunset and Australia, four hundred miles to the west, was a very distant land.

Early in the morning a faint breeze stirred aloft, freshening at sunrise and rippling the lagoon. We got underway at once and stood out to sea through the south pass; but the wind stayed light and we drifted along at two knots until noon the next day, when it died altogether and so did the sea, the long easy swell scarcely moving the boat. It was a comfortable calm and we quieted our restlessness with the *Hurricane* philosophy: "What's a day or a month or a year?" or sometimes more briefly stated when everything is done that can be done: "To hell with it"; and we dragged the mattresses out on deck and dug deep in the ship's library for books we had not read. And then there was always the vague undercurrent of hope that perhaps in a few hours the wind would come, and with plenty of food and water aboard there was a snug feeling of content. It is almost impossible to be completely unhappy when you are surrounded by groceries and books and the sea and the sky in weather so beautiful that it would even be beyond the most imaginative dreams of a California-conscious citizen. It was a cool-weather, high-pressure calm; the barometer soared; the thermometer stood at sixty at night and seventy-five at midday; and the descending air was as clear and crisp as a mountain breeze. The sun had the sky to itself all day: bright orange it came up out of the sea, at noon it was white gold, and it was red when it slipped back in the water. At night there was no moon and the heaven, milky with distant stars, was sprinkled with diamond brilliant points of light.

For five days we lay becalmed and all the swell was gone from the sea. It was literally a sheet of glass, a great deep blue mirror on which the ship hung motionless over her reflection two miles off the bottom, the only spot around three hundred and sixty degrees of horizon excepting the garbage and waste that had been tossed over the stern. After three days, we started the engine to move away from the potato peels and onion skins and then with full speed ahead we chugged around in circles for the pleasant sensation of feeling the wind on our faces and the ship rock in her own wake. Once we gave chase to a huge ocean sunfish, ten feet in diameter, and shot at the big rounded fin that waved above the surface. We had just enough fuel aboard for one hundred and fifty miles, which was only a third of the distance to Brisbane, but luck was with us, for our position, checked each noon, showed us from fifteen to twenty-five miles to the south. The sea was drifting and we were on our way at one nautical mile per hour, reading our way over the very last inch of the largest ocean.

Each noon when we laid down our latitude, Lewis would ask, "How much farther to Brisbane?" And we would carefully measure from the little cross on the chart in miles, then roughly converted the miles into hours, and hours into

literature, and answer: “One biography, two detective stories, four Saturday Evening Posts, and two Readers Digests from Brisbane.” Finally, when we were only two mystery stories from the continent, we started the motor and headed for town and prayed that our gasoline was sufficient to take us in. The wind had been dead so long that it was forgotten, so we made our own six-and-one-half knot breeze with two bronze blades whirling behind the stern post and shoving us over the dense blue mirror, letting the bow waves angle off each side and a straight path of foam streak astern.

The next day the sky was hazy to the westward, but the sea was still smooth as a pond at sunset. Land was close. At noon we picked up the yellow sand cliffs on Moreton Island just ahead and then the mainland showed through the haze off to starboard: a flat coastal plain, incongruously in the middle of which remained a few spires of rock, three thousand feet high, like a ruined cathedral. This hard core of a mountain range many millions of years old characterized for me the great geological age and the strangeness of this marsupial continent of zoological phenomena.

Moreton Bay opened up and we were busy identifying landmarks on the chart. Buoy lights and ranges were picked up. A ship laying a long straight cloud of smoke steamed out the channel, and another passed close by and the passengers waved from the deck. Fishing boats dotted the sand-bars and beach cottages showed white against the dull green. The tide rippled over the bars and the water was brown from the river. We could smell the land, a wet, muddy smell from the mangroves, and there was dust in the air. A light breeze came out of the northeast and I cut off the engine; we sighed with relief, grateful to rest our ears from the monotonous explosions from the hot exhaust. Gliding peacefully along with the Stars and Stripes waving slowly from the masthead, the sun, red from the haze, settled over the Australian continent; and the harbour lights: fixed white, flashing white, occulting white, red lights and green lights, range lights on steamers, dull yellow lights on shore—and the great red glow of the invisible city spread over the sky. The wind increased slightly and we made good time down the channel and across the bay to the river’s mouth. But the city of Brisbane was seventeen miles upstream, so we anchored for the night off the old Pile lighthouse, an inconspicuous dot in the midst of half a dozen freighters who were also waiting for daylight to work up the river. The wind increased and the *Hurricane*, forced cross sea by the outgoing tide, rolled miserably all night along.

A five o'clock in the morning, all hands shivered on deck. A cold damp fog had settled down, the wind was gone, the rigging dripped and the spars were shiny in the grey morning light. The shipping around us had come to life and the deafening blasts of their fog whistles reverberated over the water. A huge, rusty red cargo ship steamed across our bow as we were struggling with the anchor, and the officers on the bridge looked disdainfully down from their great height. The hook came on deck, grey with mud; we washed it off with the deck brush, started the motor, and steered after the rusty red cargo ship. The lighthouse keeper gave a friendly wave. Two steamers whistled rudely behind us, and we moved over to the side of the channel to give them plenty of room to pass. The tide was running in and we made good time. The sun streamed down, melting the haze, and the sea breeze came in and blew the low mist off the river. A square block of concrete with a huge mouth smelled of sewage. Jellyfish like huge multi-stemmed mushrooms floated by the ship. Houses raised on pilings lined the river; and ferryboats, launches, skiffs, and tugs plied up and down and across. A passenger ship from China with a tug shoving at her bow was docking. The six steamers were all entering at once and the *Hurricane* was lost in the shuffle. With no clutch or reverse gear, maneuvering was difficult and we scraped perilously close to the high iron-plated sides as we worked our way out of the traffic jam. Finally the port doctor spotted our yellow quarantine flag and came alongside, examined our bill of health from the New Hebrides, told us where to anchor, and, with a friendly "Cheerio," raced off to call on the boat from China. Buildings rose up on either side and tramcars rattled along the banks. Free of the shipping, we motored up the river to the heart of the city with nothing but a few ferry-boats to dodge, until the subtropical botanical gardens of Brisbane were abeam; and we anchored close to the bank in "Garden Reach."

We had crossed the South Pacific Ocean. Eleven months from the Panama Canal we had sailed, ten thousand miles, into the heart of Queensland's capital, and the smoke and noise and the industry of a third of a million people around us. So anxious were we to go ashore that I decided not to wait for the customs to come off and we hastily changed clothes. I felt awkward and uncertain in shoes, and a collar and tie constricted my sun-blackened neck. I looked out at the streets and the excitement of the town slowly permeated every fibre and I was eager to take part in the life; slowly the eleven-month philosophical lesson of "What is another day or a month or a year?" faded.

Gerry and Lewis came on deck, looking as strange as I felt, in a full complement of shore clothes; and they gingerly picked up the dinghy, one on each end, to



throw her over the side. With a foot on the deck-house and one on the rail, they swung the skiff to the count: "One . . . Two . . . Three. . . ." Crash! One end of the dinghy went out over the rail and the other smashed down on a stanchion, knocked a plank out of the bottom and then fell in the river and filled. Gerry said he was "damned," Lewis was "damned," and I was worse. It was Hector's inning and he chortled and chuckled. Down below we trooped, stripped off our good clothes, donned dungarees, and went to work with canvas, Stockholm tar, and boxwood. With a tackle, the waterlogged dinghy was hauled on deck and repaired. "Now throw on the count of *three*," said Gerry. And the skiff was successfully launched. We went below, laboriously scrubbed our hands, sticky with tar, and dressed again. But, just when we were dropping into the dinghy, we were hailed from the bank and I saw a small man with a brief case. We rowed down to the ferry landing and I saw "H. M. C." on the brief case of the man who was demanding our attention. His Majesty's customs had caught up with us and literally took the first beer right out of our mouths. In five more minutes all hands would have been in the door under the neon sign with the legend "Queensland's Best 4X Beer." Back aboard we rowed the customs, and below he withdrew from his brief case the most formidable set of papers I had ever seen. Pages and pages of finely set type called for a listing of all our stores, each can of milk had to be counted and checked in duplicate and triplicate.

"Look," I said, "we haven't had any lunch and it's two hours past noon. You steer us to a good restaurant and then tomorrow I will have all our stores counted and papers filled out."

"Too right," and "Good-o," said H. M. C.

And at last we rowed ashore and our hard heels clicked again on concrete as we dodged pedestrian traffic on Brisbane's busy streets. We entered a restaurant, described to us as "Bonza," and before the amazed eyes of His Majesty's Customs ordered two complete meals each.

He remarked: "After the way I see you Yanks eat, there will be no use counting your sea stores because there ain't any on board to count."

"He's a barbarian!" I whispered to Gerry. "I'll bet he likes tinned beef!"

## Chapter XVIII

**AUSTRALIA** is not only upside down but also reversed. It is hottest at New Year's and coldest on the Fourth of July. The horses run around the race track in the opposite direction and all hands drive on the wrong side of the street. A *private bar* means a public saloon, and a saloon is a second-class bar. In the early stages the young men went west as in America, but in Australia they came back again to live on the seacoast; so the majority of the less than seven million people live in the five major coastal cities. But, as America was, it is a young virile country, hospitable as our traditional West and friendly as Polynesia.

Brisbane, a long narrow city reaching for miles along the river, is like Mobile, Alabama, multiplied by five, less the coloured population—for Australia is almost pure white; the aborigines in the vast “out-back” or the “never-never” are too small numerically to change this percentage of purity more than the fraction describing Ivory soap. With a latitude just south of the tropic, it is hot in summer, hot only as a city on a continent can be; but in winter from May to October it is cool. After stewing in the tropics, Brisbane was a relief, and when the wind came southwest off the highlands it was cold and we slept under a pile of blankets. Our ship was no longer a mode of transportation but a house in the heart of the city, and domesticity reigned with the homely routine of listing laundry, pressing clothes, shelling peas, shaving daily, roasting legs of lamb or joints of beef, building salads, and in general following the doctor's advice to eat plenty of fresh food, which was our most pleasant occupation in Brisbane which can be put on paper with impunity.

Down the river a shipwright slipped the *Hurricane* and located the leak; a block bearing for the rudder post, just at the waterline, had worked loose. A new one was made, bolted through and caulked all around, and the bilges, dry again, stopped the morning physical culture development of a strong right arm, diverting it from pumping to painting, to the profit of the decks and the cabin interior.

Lewis stayed with us about a week, then bought a ticket on the Imperial Airways to Paris, France, which made us feel a little sick; in five days he would cover as

much ground as we had done in seventeen months. When we gave Lewis a hand over the side with his baggage and ashore to the waiting taxi, I felt that he was departing this world in a rocket machine. All earthly distance melted, space faded into time at the thought of three sixty-mile squares on the chart each hour. When the *Hurricane* made over seven knots I thought we were flying, and anything over ten knots was alarming. Just two months after Lewis' departure, we received a letter in Sydney with a Papeete postmark, incredibly signed "Lew." In Paris he met his girl, sailed with her to New York where they were married, then across country to San Francisco where they shipped on the mail boat for Tahiti to settle down and raise a family under the coconuts. He had gone around the world and acquired a wife by the time the *Hurricane* had changed her latitude from Brisbane to Sydney.

We lived in Brisbane long enough to learn that Australia was composed of three R's: our 'arbour, our bridge and our Bradman. The first two were permanently a part of Sydney while the latter moved about with the Cricketers, filling newspaper headlines or doing a duck on a sticky wicket. And on the insistent advice of the most civic-minded Brisbanites we decided to sail for Australia's first city and anchor in R 'arbour under R-bridge. But we got off to a false start.

In the Royal Queensland Yacht Club we became friends with the Rear Commodore, Mr. Jack Figgus, who was one of the Anzacs lucky enough to return to his native land after the World War. There were 329,883 troops sent overseas and the casualties amounted to 314,078, which explained Jack's philosophy when he agreed to ship on the *Hurricane* and work down the east coast in the winter time with the advance knowledge that he would be deathly seasick—and he was. And the *Hurricane* put back into Brisbane, not because of Mr. Figgus or the headwind or the steep seas that came rolling up out of the stormy Tasman, but because the skipper developed another out-sized boil on the very extremity of his spinal column and was tied up in a granny knot. Back to port we raced, after gaining sixty miles southing, and up the river and into the hospital where I was cut with a knife and laid to rest, straightened out between the sheets for two weeks.

Again we sailed. Jack, who had been more sick than I ever imagined a man could be, moved aboard and said that he had never felt better in his life, because he thought the excessive vomiting was not only a stomach purifier but a cure for his affliction of gout. We also signed on another yachtsman, Tom Hard, who

wanted to try his hand at offshore sailing. We arranged to sail this time with another yacht, the *Kewarra*, just off the ways; and the owners, Messrs. Gagen and Freeman, the former a London convert and the latter a tall, lanky Queenslander, would race us unofficially to Sydney. It was the trial trip for their new ship, and she was exactly the same length as the *Hurricane*.

Just before dark both ships passed Moreton Point and stood offshore close-hauled in a moderate south wind. The *Kewarra*, falling off to leeward, was lost in the night and we didn't see them again until after we had anchored in Sydney's famous harbour. Stronger came the wind, then the rain, and the sea built up against the south-going current. We thrashed about, calling all hands to bring her around every few hours to take advantage of each slant of wind and inch our way south. It rained continuously for four days; the wind howled out of the southwest and, as we plunged into the dirty coloured white-topped seas, the bow, scooping up water, tossed it angrily over her shoulder, drenching the helmsman in spray warm in contrast to the icy cold rain. After the second day, all our changes of clothes were wet, for our jackets were no longer waterproof, due to the months of tropical heat.

Forward the decks leaked and our two new hands were driven out of their bunks to sleep on the floor; in the main cabin, the skylight leaked and the water, trickling down the carlines, dripped steadily into the bunks, maliciously finding your face no matter how you turned. Old stuff, but not with the cabin thermometer standing at 45° F.! Poor Jack never touched a bite of food and Tom ate only a little. They lay on the floor at night with the dishpan between them, shivering and vomiting. By day, they both lay in the scuppers, hanging on a stanchion with their heads over the rail. Gerry and I, with our stomachs full of hot food, didn't mind sleeping in sodden blankets as long as Hector kept the coffee hot and stewpot boiling. But we could not help laughing and chiding our seasick friends; when Tom Hard lost his false teeth over the side in sixty fathoms, we were hilarious and, putting a cross on the chart, threatened to report the incident to the Bureau of Navigation and suggest that they mark the spot as a new danger: *Hard Tooth Shoal*. Jack said that he never knew other people's misery was the basis of Yankee humour.

On the morning of the fifth day it cleared and we picked up the coast of New South Wales and a high ridge of sandstone cliffs streaked with the dull green Australian brush warped by the wind. A bay lay behind the promontory, open to the north but offering shelter from southerly winds. Trial Bay was the name on

the chart and the anchorage was clean. I looked at the weather and then at Jack Figgus. "Slack off, just a little," I said to Gerry. "We got to anchor and feed the crew or we'll have a corpse in Sydney."

Behind the hooked cape, Trial Bay was a huge sickle of yellow sand. A little town, a summer resort and fishing camp were spilled over the top of a low hill back from the centre of the beach. The water was smooth and all hands were grateful to be out of the wind and weather. Ashore we bought a few fresh supplies and had a warm beer in a cold pub. Aboard we dried our clothes and fed the crew back to normal, putting to sea again in moderate weather with a fair wind, which rapidly increased to a fresh breeze that drove us down at eight knots in beautiful clear, cool weather. At sunset the wind let us down in sight of Sydney Heads, but the lights beckoned and we started the engine and moved in between the great sandstone cliffs. The harbour with its many headlands and bays was marked by the fights of the city marching back in straight rows from the water's edge. Steamers entered and sailed; ferryboats, like little lighted villages, detached themselves from either shore and crisscrossed over the dark water; and the huge bridge arched over the harbour in the distance, with the traffic going over its hump like a procession of lightning-bugs.

Where to anchor, no one knew; but the chart showed a little nook near the heart of the city called Farm Cove, and we steered in past the long lean cruiser that was ghostly grey in the half-moonlight and dropped the hook. In the morning we read the name of our neighbour as H.M.A.S. *Sydney* and went immediately ashore to the customs and officially entered the *Hurricane*. When we returned, Hector was seething with excitement, and in his own "ship's language," which was a mixture of Spanish, English, Tahitian, and Australian, told us about the visitor he had received from our neighbour. We had dropped anchor in the very middle of the prohibited anchorage reserved for naval vessels only.

The situation in America would have been easily handled by a whole-gale voice from the bo'sun of The President's Navy: "Hey you! Get the hell out of there!" But not the British. The officer of the day on His Majesty's Australian ship, *Sydney*, in full regalia called on the *Hurricane* and left his card inviting us aboard after four for a "sundowner." Upon leaving he politely explained to Tom, who had remained aboard, that the anchorage was reserved for naval vessels and that we should move at our convenience. We accepted both invitations, first moving the ship to a beautiful little anchorage called Double Bay, and then aboard the *Sydney* for "sundowners," where we found that the hospitality of the

British Navy promotes more international good will than many of her statesmen.

The *Kewarra* found us that afternoon, reporting that they had entered Sydney Heads at daylight, or about eight hours after the *Hurricane*; they had also sheltered from the weather just north of Trial Bay; also they intended to stay in Sydney a week. We told them we expected to be in the harbour a month to carry out some plans for remodelling the interior of the ship. But the *Kewarra* extended its visit to six weeks and we remained in port five months! It was not until one year later that we lay side by side again and that was in Singapore, and much water and one reef had passed under our keel.

In Sydney, after a month of pubs, movies, dinners, teas, where we followed the life that two sailors would naturally lead in a friendly city ten thousand miles from home, we hauled out the boat across the harbour at Neutral Bay and went to work in earnest.

During the long night watch in the trades, I had often thought of ways to improve the *Hurricane*, and I had sketched alternative rigs and consulted Gerry about the interior. Now, with time on our hands and supplies available, we tore out bulkheads and enlarged the main cabin, doing away with the so-called dark room for photographic equipment. It was not successful because of the heat and I used instead the main cabin for developing negatives. This was converted into a chart table, medicine cabinet, and shelves for pilot books and navigation instruments. The tiller was a more successful method of developing strong arms and backs than steering the ship in a hard breeze; and we installed a brass-bound teakwood wheel with a hard bronze quadrant and pinion gear. The centreboard and case were always a problem in worm-infested waters so we took them out, giving still more room in the main cabin, and plugged up the copper-lined slit in the keel. And then, with a terrific amount of back-breaking labour and with the aid of one old and small shipwright with a large wart on the end of his nose, we cut and shaped a false keel from a thirty-foot twelve-by-sixteen Australian ironbark timber that was too heavy to float and harder than its name implied. Then we raised the sides of the cockpit, installed a fancy new chromium-plated binnacle, scraped off the white paint to the bare wood, and then spent a full day in a local pub debating on the colour to repaint the ship. We decided on black with a green water-line and a bright yellow stripe on the edge of the covering board. When it was finished, we cheered.

The ship was as sleek and shiny as a new automobile; but Hector looked dark,

sulked, and predicted that a black boat was *mala fortuna*. I think he fully expected to see the *Hurricane* sink in her cradle when she was launched from the slip. But, in the trial trips around the harbour and one outside run to Broken Bay, the ship was steadier, easier to steer, and the roomier cabin a fresh delight. We settled down at once to comfortable living, and by Christmas, one year from Tahiti, we had learned the rich Australian language with liberal use of *the* adjective, how and when to pronounce “a” as “i”—*aye*—so that when it was our turn to *shout* a round of drinks in a circle of friends at a pub the bartender no longer looked up and asked if we were Yanks or *Palmies* (English).

## Chapter XIX

**THE** heat of the summer had gone and there was a chill in the south-westerly wind that hurried the ship away from the land. The sun, afraid to plunge into the cold green water, slid obliquely behind the clouds over the continent exploding them into red and orange fragments and painting the eastern sky with soft shades of orchid. The sea was iridescent. The headlands on the coast, black against the sunset, faded and were lost in the night. Only the glow of the city against the sky and the lights on Sydney Heads reminded us of the life we had left.

I stood in the companionway with the warmth from the galley stove against my back and, facing the cold fresh breeze, watched the dark water slowly drown the blinking lights, and Australia was gone. The wind moaned aloft, the pipe turnbuckles whistled a high note, the stanchions a low note, and the booms, lifting and falling with each roll of the ship, creaked the sheet blocks as we sang on our way north-east. Security was astern and the sensuous comfort of a city where you could sleep in bed all night and your fare was limited only by your imagination; but ahead was the sea and the islands, New Guinea, and the East. I did not think of the task at hand or speculate on the next mass of mountains or fringe of palms beyond the convex surface of the sea, because in Sydney there were friends I did not want to leave, and this time the land was not forgotten when it had settled in the sea. We had lived ashore too long and roots had taken hold in the Australian soil. Transplanting was painful. In Borabora we were a different race and never grew to the land; but in five months Sydney had become a part of us and my thoughts lagged behind with the ever-increasing distance from shore. A pale moon showed through the haze, whitening the sky, and the sea took shape in irregular undulations. The breeze freshened and a heavy bank of clouds with a ragged white top like a huge breaker came up out of the south and overtook the moon, and again the scene was without definition and we rushed through space.

Hector came up for his hour watch and we went below for supper. Out of the wind it was quiet except for the creak and groan of the ship and the slosh of the bilge. Wedged against the bulkhead on the seat on the lee side, we ate in silence with a plate in our laps, artfully conveying the food to our mouths with a rhythm in time to the rolling of the ship. Gerry turned in without a word and I went on



deck and took the helm so Hector could stow his pots and pans before turning in. We were flying along in a quartering breeze and the horizon was the same all around, even the glow of light against the sky was gone but I could not detach myself from shore. The exhilaration of an eight-knot breeze would not overcome my melancholy wondering why we had left Sydney and a little square apartment in a block of flats. Then I thought of our departure from Double Bay and smiled, for that had been spectacular.

Friends, acquaintances, and the curious had crowded the jetty at the head of the bay. The press had hired a launch, and with a photographer requested that we leave under full sail. The anchorage was crowded and the wind strong offshore, and the long-keeled *Hurricane* required room for maneuvering. It was against my better judgment to set the main and mizzen at anchor; I would have preferred to use only the jib to swing her smartly around and weave out through the moored yachts, because directly astern was a clear channel. But, if the headsails were hoisted as soon as the anchor broke out, and sheeted in and the main and mizzen run out, she would sail around in a long curve out into the harbour. The chain groaned up through the hawse pipes and the ratchet on the windlass clicked; and, just as the anchor broke out, a strong gust of wind came offshore and the bow fell away: the staysail whipped up and filled but the downhaul on the jib jammed and the new sheet on the mizzen would not run easily through the blocks. With the helm hard over she would not pay off any more and we charged straight at a dense fleet of small fry. The crowd on the jetty shouted in alarm. I kicked the helm over to starboard and, hauling on the mizzen sheet, shouted, "Ready about!" The jetty was only a boat's length to windward. The ship rushed towards shore, then fell off on the other tack, presenting a broadside to the jetty scarcely ten feet away. The jib was freed and set and, with the mizzen slacked again, we sailed a beautiful curve out through the fleet. It had been a close call, but the crowd on the jetty, thinking it was a brilliant maneuver, cheered lustily. I breathed a sigh of relief, for the honour of a Yankee skipper had been at stake. . . .

The wind was increasing and the ship, from the steady pressure aloft, was digging in, rolling less. To leeward, a few major stars showed pale through the haze. The ship was cutting a wide swath of phosphorescent foam. Then suddenly a squall from the south was upon us and the stormy Tasman went on a rampage. I shouted, unnecessarily, for the crash of the seas and the high-pitched whining of the wind aloft brought all hands on deck. Straddling the wheel, I strained to hold her off. The rain swept across the sea stinging cold. It was impossible to

look to windward. Deeper and deeper in the water we went until there was little freeboard left. She was awash with white water and often only the deck-house was visible. The wind increased, screaming and tearing at the rigging. "Get the mizzen off her first," I shouted in Gerry's ear, "and then we'll reef the main." Desperately Hector and Gerry clawed in the heavy wet canvas. The strain on the helm eased up but her speed scarcely slackened, and she ran wild through the night with the log winding up ten knots. Suddenly a furious gust of wind blew the staysail out of the bolt ropes. Before they could take it in, there was little left but a line of ragged pennants whipping on the stay. When the triangle of rope and tattered canvas was piled on deck, I shouted to Gerry to set the jib to hold her on the course while we took in the main, for the windage on the furled mizzen was driving her up. I realized that if the main ever luffed in this gale she would go the way of the staysail. With the jib on she was balanced again but the stay bowed out to leeward. I prayed that nothing else would give way and left the helm to lend a hand on the main, and we got her in. Yet the wind increased. The jib, anxious to go with the wind, reached ahead like a kite, pulling the ship over the sea. A double reef was tucked in the main and she was hoisted again and we flew through the blackness. The jib was taken in and made fast around the bowsprit and we were safe. Without the press of sail aloft we rolled. The seas crashed under the counter, broke against the side and over the bow. Still the wind increased until we lay over again and dug in. The seas were steeper and the gale was whipping their white crests off and blowing them across the ship. The sky was no lighter to windward and, with no sign of relief in sight, I shouted: "The hell with it. We'll heave her to!"

Like waiting for a moderate sea to land through the surf, I watched for a black space in the procession of white breaking tops. Then I yelled and all hands strained on the main sheet. Up into the wind we shot, climbed up over a mountain of water, poised for an instant, then plunged into the abyss. Her headway was stopped and she rode over the next sea like a duck. With the double-reefed main sheeted in and the helm lashed hard up, she was steady and comfortable, pointing between three and six points from the wind. Down below all hands slept the night through, warm and dry, while the gale moaned futilely through the rigging and the halyards beat a tattoo on the mast. How long the weather lasted, no one will know. When daylight awakened us next morning, the wind was light and the seas had lengthened out. I blew out the salt-crusted hurricane lantern and went below, thinking of bacon and eggs. The gale had severed my connections with shore and the zest for sailing came back. I had the pleasant feeling of content with a well-stocked ship that defied any

weather the gods had sent. Here was the orderly peace of the sea again, and I looked around at the grey lumpy horizon and thought of the land that lay beyond.

We had cleared for New Guinea via Lord Howe Island, five hundred miles north-east of Sydney. Stowed forward were eleven sacks of mail that the steamer had been unable to land a fortnight previous because of a hurricane that had curved down from the Coral Sea past Lord Howe and then south-eastward, passing northward of New Zealand. This last storm of the season did little damage, but the seas, thrown up against Sydney Heads hundreds of miles from the storm centre, were a thunderous testimony of the destruction raging far offshore. But a tropical cyclone is not necessary to make the Tasman Sea dangerous. Before this storm two small boats had gone down between Sydney and Lord Howe Island without a trace and eight men were missing. With this in mind and the evidence we had had of the rapidity of change from fair weather to foul, we sailed the remaining three hundred-odd miles with one eye to windward and the other on the barometer.

But the treacherous Tasman settled down and the wind stayed light and fair, and on the morning of the fourth day the two mountains on the south end of Lord Howe stood boldly out of the sea. Just after noon we anchored inside the lagoon protected from the sea by the southernmost live coral reef in the world, for Lord Howe is thirty-one and a half degrees south of the Equator, and nowhere else does live coral occur at that extreme latitude. But this is not the island's only claim to fame. It is also the palm seed centre of the world, and the original florists' potted palms that decorate many a hotel lobby throughout the world start from the seeds gathered on Lord Howe Island.

A launch came off to meet us and we went ashore on top of our eleven sacks of mail. Another yacht, the *Rondon*, a little smaller than the *Hurricane*, was anchored in the lagoon. This brought the percentage of successful passages by small craft up to fifty per cent, for the year. The two that did not make it left tragic holes in some of the families on Lord Howe Island, whose population is only one hundred and twenty. There was still an air of uncertainty among the people; real hope had long since gone for the missing men, but every time a dot appeared on the horizon this vague uncertainty was reborn and the men climbed the lookout on Mt. Malabar. "It could not be.... Yet?" The unexpected arrival of the *Hurricane* had caused such vague feeling of impossible hope. The sea had been searched for over a month by plane, steamer, and yacht, but not

even a piece of wood had been seen. Anything can happen at sea, the lost could return. Hope was dead in the adult mind but not in adolescent Roy whose father had gone down in the *Viking*. Every night small Roy plodded up steep Malabar, six hundred feet above the sea, and built a fire, tending it carefully, unaided, until exhaustion drove him down to his home. Hope would not die in the face of a month of blank horizons. I knew that boy would never be beaten by life; character was formed during these lonely night vigils, his face alight by the fire as he felt the relentless wind and heard the seas pound on the headlands.

There were two major delays in Lord Howe that stretched our intended week's visit to two months, but a more pleasant two months were never enjoyed by the *Hurricane*'s after guard. The first was the staysail: we ordered a new one from our sailmaker friend in Sydney, mailing the specifications on the yacht *Rondon*, which sailed for the mainland a week after our arrival. In three weeks the steamer, the old *Mirinda*, would call at Lord Howe, New Hebrides bound, and we anxiously awaited her arrival. In the meantime I spent many long hours sewing on the old staysail, which I staked out on the lawn behind the Hineses' house, where Gerry and I boarded on the unparalleled hospitality of the family. Mrs. Hines being the best cook in Australasia, the three weeks passed quickly.

One morning the *Mirinda* anchored off the lagoon's pass. The cargo was lightered ashore, but there was no sail for the *Hurricane*; only a letter from a friend of mine in Sydney who wrote:

*"Sorry the sail was not finished in time to catch the boat. I kept at the sailmaker continually and he had it all done except roping; but last night the strain must have been too much for he got properly on the scoot. I dug him out of the pub at 10.00 o'clock this morning and put him back to work and thought everything was all right. But, unfortunately, he passed out at about 2.00 p.m. so that was the end.*

*Russ"*

"What's another three weeks," I said to despondent Gerry, who answered, "But it's gettin' cold, Coppy, and I'm tropical minded."

It was late March and the southern winter, chasing the sun north, chilled the nights. The days were warm when the sun was shining, but there was plenty of

rain and usually the tops of Mt. Gower and Mt. Lidgebird were obscured by mist. I agreed with Gerry and was anxious for the warm water and steady winds to the northward. The next weeks were as pleasant as the first, for there was plenty of fish in the shallow lagoon and the coves and bays outside, and we combed the beaches and searched the reef for clams. Lord Howe is very much like a *white* South Sea Island, with the seed palms like imitation coconuts in miniature; but it is a fertile land and temperate-zone fruits and vegetables flourish, with oranges, lemons, and bananas. The pastures are green and there is plenty of milk and butter, but most of the meat is shipped in from Sydney and kept in the cold storage plant. With all this at hand, the *Hurricane's* after guard grew fat; but not Hector, who, from a lack of friends ashore and with little work to do on the boat, went Mexican and lived aboard the ship on beans and his own homemade sweet bread, which was a concoction horrible to behold. Deeper and deeper in depression he sank until even the frantic shout: "Fish!" failed to raise his drooping lids. Crouched with his head on his knees on the deck-house, he looked like a stone carving of an Aztec.

There are only two cash crops at Lord Howe: the palm seeds and the tourists. The first are mutually owned by the islanders. The first families had equal shares in the total crop which has been subdivided down through the generations. Originally, Lord Howe was the only place in the world where these seeds would propagate, but now they have been successfully grown elsewhere and the price naturally dropped. But the tourist crop helps balance the island budget and the islanders want for nothing. It is like a small undeveloped Bermuda, an easy two days from Sydney, and each *Mirinda* brings in from one to three dozen visitors who distribute themselves among the various boarding houses on the east side of the island. At the Hineses', a minister, a chemist, and a retired New Guinea gold miner and his wife regularly put their feet under the long table three times a day. Gerry and I, as the non-paying star boarders, lent a hand in the galley, cooking and washing up. Mr. Hines was in Sydney half the time, but the son, Eric, the island's most famous fisherman, and the daughter, Ilima, the island beauty, completed the guest house picture. The only complication that life presented was coaxing Eric away from his fishing to gather firewood for the galley range.

In three weeks the *Mirinda* came in with our sail. It was a beautiful job and fitted perfectly. Even Hector was cheered by the new canvas, which predicted an early departure northward.

Then came our second delay: the chronometer, for no earthly reason, stopped after two years of faithful service. It was as dead as a rock. We had taken the chronometer ashore in order to fumigate the ship: the cockroaches had won and Hector was a beaten man, for all his powder and Mayan magic had failed. When I opened a food locker, invariably there was a noise like crinkling dry paper as millions of roaches scuttled for cover. It was too much, so the cyanide and sulphuric man was called aboard and he made quick work of our pests. But our watch had stopped and without time we would be without longitude; so we sent it off to Sydney and settled down again at the Hineses'.

The ship was now an island fixture, and the consensus of opinion ashore was that we were here for good. The black hull in the lagoon seemed as permanent as a double sparred buoy. Colder was the weather and the winter seas on the headlands rumbled night and day. The old *Mirinda* came in again, almost rolling her topsides under. Our chronometer was aboard, repaired and rated, and we made ready for sea. A farewell dinner was planned by the Hineses, and we made the rounds of the island for the last time.

It was a cold, foggy night and a light rain occasionally spattered down on the hard palm fronds and the tall Norfolk pines sighed in the wind. We were seated around the Hineses' table and Gerry had just remarked: "You can always tell when the skipper is really going to sea by the way he eats." I looked up over a pile of chicken bones, chewing vigorously to reply, when a noise like a cow in distress rolled in from the lagoon, blast after blast came from the *Hurricane's* fog horn. We rushed down to the beach. It was a high spring tide and the lights on the ship were over against the far shore. The wind was light and only a slight surge came over the protecting reef. We ran around the semicircle of sand and found the *Hurricane* aground. Most of the able-bodied men turned out and we worked in vain to kedge the ship off; but it was no use, the tide was falling. As mysteriously as the chronometer had stopped, the anchor chain, fast to a permanent mooring sunk in the lagoon, had parted. Hector, looking black as the night, was muttering to himself: "Malo, malo, muy malo— negro no servi."

"What in the hell happened?" I asked. But Hector only nodded his head and continued muttering about bad luck because we had painted the hull black in Sydney. I thought: first a sail, then the chronometer, and now this.

The next day we kedged her off at high tide and anchored out near the pass. It was a warm, still day and the sea, surging up under the eroded cliffs, echoed like

distant thunder. It was a sad day. Old, wrinkled Granny Wilson had told Gerry that he reminded her of her own boy who went to sea one quiet day and never came back. The sea had taken heavy toll from her family, sons and grandsons had been recently lost in the *Viking*. Islanders have the same respect for the sea as sailors, for what is an island but a huge moored ship breasting the blue water stream, the ebb and flow of the tide.

The Hines family rowed out to see us off and spent several hours aboard while we waited for a breath of air to take us north. We were loaded with gifts of fresh food, bunches of bananas hung from the shrouds, boxes of vegetables were under the shade of the dinghy, and a large black duck, fast to a stanchion by a length of marline to one leg, waddled back and forth within his scope.

Late afternoon a light breeze came out of the west, whispering that it was time to go to sea again. The shiny black hull came to life under the white canvas, and we sailed out of the pass with the tide and steered for New Guinea. In the light beam wind, she was self-steering. Gerry and I lay prone on the deck-house, watching the familiar landmarks on Lord Howe slowly change their bearings as the ship ghosted along over the long blue slopes marked by tiny ripples, and thinking that again the *Hurricane* had stayed too long in port.

## Chapter XX

**LIGHTNING** flashed all around the horizon outlining the grotesque shapes of the torn black clouds; but overhead it was clear and the stars were bright. The wind freshening shifted to the northwest and we heeled over close-hauled on the port tack. The thunder grew louder and the white flashes from behind the clouds blinded the stars. Then the wind shifted to the north, sang louder in the rigging, and drove the ship steadier through the confused sea. All around, the jagged-edged wall of clouds rose higher and higher until the hole overhead was closed. The phosphorescence of the sea was brighter in the intense darkness. Somewhere ahead lay Middleton Reef, a circle of coral awash and strewn with the bones of many ships, where the most conspicuous landmark is the bowsprit and figurehead of an old sailing vessel pointing skyward within the lagoon. I called all hands to stand by. The wind, uncertain of its direction, was squally and the sea came in from the north and west against a southerly swell. The clouds closed in and the flashes of lightning, followed close by the deafening crash of thunder, showed a solid curtain of rain advancing across the sea, and the wind aloft was the angry voice of hornets. Then the rain came straight down, cold and hard, and the wind, stopping dead, left us wallowing in a confused sea with the banging of booms and tackle. We took down the main and the jib, sheeted in the mizzen and staysail, and went below. The lightning coinciding with the thunder was like an acetylene torch through the port lights.

Soaked by the rain we huddled, dripping, around the inadequate heat from the Primus stove and sipped hot chocolate, and talked, during the brief lulls in the cannonade aloft, of what would happen if the ship were struck by lightning. For hours the rain hammered on deck and then, above the noise, I heard the whine of wind aloft and the boat stiffened from the pressure of taut canvas. We set all sail, the wind was back in the west, the storm centre rumbled off to the eastward, and we steered north, with a lookout in the main shrouds, to pass to leeward of Middleton Reef, which we never saw, but we felt its lee just before the sunrise lit a clean, washed sky.

That windless storm had been a nightmare and we gazed gratefully at the fine weather with sleepy eyes. The ship was on her course, and every hour to the northward in the variables put us nearer the trades and warmer weather. At noon,



Gerry, crossing up our morning line of position with a latitude, found us fifteen miles to the eastward of our dead-reckoning course. In mid-afternoon we carefully checked the longitude and found that the discrepancy had increased. But the weather was fine and the ocean clear of reefs for several hundred miles. The wind, blowing steadily from the westward, pushed us one hundred and fifty miles north without a man on the helm until the next noon, when our position showed us away off to the eastward of the course steered. Something was wrong. We checked the compass as best we could with azimuths on the sun, but each time we had a different answer and it was impossible with such inconsistency to figure a workable deviation. With no wireless aboard, there was no means of checking the chronometer unless we spoke a steamer on this trackless ocean. Confidence in our time had been shaken by the mysterious stopping of the watch in Lord Howe Island. The *Hurricane* was literally lost at sea and each day the dead reckoning and the observed position angled farther apart. All we could depend upon was latitude; so across the chart we drew two lines northward as far as the nearest parallel of a reef: one line, the average compass course steered; and the other was drawn through the daily positions observed. Somewhere between those two pencil lines was the ship, but at the foot of the triangle was a spread of one hundred and twenty-five miles, and from that point to New Guinea was an ocean strewn with reefs.

At noon on the fifth day we crossed our last safe latitude line and Gerry and I divided the afternoon watch on the crosstrees of the mainmast. We had entered the trades the night before and the weather was mild and clear with a steady south-east breeze; but there was a nervous tension aboard the ship from the uncertainty of our position that increased with the sun's descent. At 4.00 p.m. Gerry, stiff-legged, climbed slowly down the ratlines and reported a clean ocean all around.

"A half hour more and we'll heave her to on the port tack under plenty of sail, so if she makes anything she'll make southing," I said, and paced the deck using a handful of matches to light my pipe and then climbed quickly aloft on the windward shrouds to the crosstrees and stared across the intense blue. The boat was a tiny wedge below, ploughing a six-knot wake, and the water was as unfathomable as the black holes between the stars at night. There was not a danger in a hundred miles of our guessed position; but with an erratic compass and the chronometer an unknown factor, sailing at night was out of the question. I scanned the horizon to the west and north and east, watching each white-capped sea. I turned and looked aft at the straight line of wake laid over the

regular sea. Then, before deciding to heave to, I put my pipe in my pocket and shinned up the mast to the very top, hanging on to the single shrouds and, swaying through space in a long elliptical curve, looked northward, and there stretching across the course a few miles away was a long line of white. My stomach felt as if I had not eaten for a week and, sliding back to the crosstrees, I called down to Gerry:

“Reef-ho! and dead ahead!”

Gerry asked, “Shall I bring her around?”

“No! take the wheel and have Hector stand by to jibe the main!”

The line of reef was close and the sea beyond, stretching away out of sight, was smooth, and the light green water was mottled with purple depths like a lagoon. For ten miles east and west ran this jagged line of death. A ten-thousand foot wall from the floor of the sea to the surface stopped the mighty Pacific, and the hollow thunder of the sea and the hissing of the break was the fatal song of shipwreck.

“Five hundred miles to the nearest dry land in a ten-foot flat-bottom dinghy,” I thought as I slid down on deck.

“By God, Coppy,” said Gerry, “what in the hell *could* we do if we had stacked up on that!”

“Nothing. But let’s get out o’ here. Hector! haul on that main sheet!”

We jibed and steered into the sunset. The reef from aloft ended in a hook to the north and identification on the chart as South Bellona Reef was positive. The chronometer was correct. We were over a hundred miles from the compass course steered. With infinite relief, we sailed away from the danger until midnight, but there was more coral to the northward and we hove her to until the certainty of daylight. Hector’s looks were dark as the ship’s black hull and he muttered his superstitions to himself as we sailed west in the soft tropical night, telling me that black was the colour of death and pleading with me to repaint the ship white, enumerating our bad luck since Sydney. A white boat, he said, sat on the water like a swan, but “*Negro no servi, muy malo!*” I smiled, confidence regained from our positive position; but that night, rocking in the dark cradle of the invisible sea, I had bad dreams and shouted profane commands in my sleep

until I awakened Gerry, who swore quietly from the opposite bunk.

The next day, deeper in the trades, we sang along to the northward and picked up another line of reef that checked with our noon position. We praised the makers of our watch and again tried to determine a deviation card for the compass; but each time we squinted through the pelorus at the sun we had a different answer. It's the motion of a small boat, I thought, and decided to anchor inside the Chesterfields and swing the ship in still water. The Chesterfields are a haven of refuge in the western Pacific's graveyard. One islet a half mile long proudly supported two scraggly coconut palms; and there are many other islets, a few as high as seventeen feet; the tops are covered with a low bush. The whole is a huge lagoon forty miles wide and sixty miles long, and the western reef is a continuous line for seventy-five miles with only two or three passes.

In the morning we made a landfall on the two lone coconuts and sailed along in the lee of the reef in smooth water to the pass. Inside, the water was rough and the short seas broke furiously on the lagoon side of the coral barriers. There was no land in sight to windward, and for hours we tacked across the dark green water of the lagoon until we picked up a chain of low islets, late in the afternoon, and anchored over a stretch of coral sand two fathoms down, close under the lee of two sandy, bush-topped islets in the southeast elbow of the huge lagoon. The reefs from the *right* side were a friendly protection from the sea; the black ship was safe on the still white-green water and a long scope of chain running over the bottom looked as if it were laid under glass. With fishing tackle in the dinghy, we rowed ashore and raised a million sea birds from their nests. The large black-brown frigate birds were mating, and under their throats a scarlet pouch, inflated to a large size during courtship, slowly disappeared when they were frightened from the tops of the low bush. The terns and boobies nested on the ground, their mottled eggs almost invisible in the coarse, ground coral. Sharks had followed the dinghy towards shore, and the smaller ones, five or six feet long, navigating in eighteen inches of water with their dorsal fins exposed, rushed at the oars when the blades were dipped. The water was warm nineteen degrees south of the Equator and we had hoped for a swim, but contented ourselves with splashing in the shallow water a few feet from the beach. Hector, dancing with excitement at the prospect of fishing in virgin waters and doing battle with his old enemy, the shark, brought me his light ship-made harpoon from the dinghy. The sharks, attracted by our splashing, were coasting slowly towards shore on each little lagoon surge. I waded cautiously out in knee-deep water, the spear poised.

Hector shouted, “Look! Capitan, here iss won beeg bastard! Keel heem! Keel heem, Capi.” And he rushed back and forth on the beach like a retriever, hesitating to go in the water for fear of scaring the shark. The seven-foot shark at which Hector was pointing was motionless over the white sandy bottom. One more step and I would be within easy range. I fully expected to see the shark swim rapidly away, as usual when molested in shallow water; but, instead, as the next little sea came in, he charged straight for me and I stuck him just back of the head with the spear and then jumped ashore with the line in hand. Hector and I both tugged frantically. The shark, ploughing a furrow seaward, bent the light spear to a right angle, then it pulled out and we stumbled back in the loose sand. Hector made several disparaging remarks about the shark’s mother and all hands went in search of smaller game. We wandered around the island, which was only a few hundred yards long; futilely chased stingrays in the shallows, but on the windward side speared an ugly moray eel that bit viciously on the iron rod. I crushed his head with a stone and Hector sawed through the tough skin with his knife and cut out a few strips of white meat for bait. Returning to the dinghy with a coral rock for an anchor, which was made fast to the painter, we shoved off and dropped over a deep blue hole among the shoal coral heads to fish. The baited hooks were not in the water a minute when all hands had strikes and we hauled in the big lagoon fish, speckled groupers, trevally, and red rock cod; but then the sharks moved in, invisible in the depths, swallowed our struggling fish, burned our hands and took away our tackle. Hector saved his line with a quick jerk and brought up the dripping head of a huge rock cod. Then we gathered birds’ eggs ashore and went aboard the *Hurricane*, and the firm decks felt secure underfoot; it was the loneliest place on earth and the viciousness of the aquatic life was appalling.

Gerry said, “I would hesitate to dangle my hand in the water in this part of the ocean.”

These white-meated fish baked in the oven were sweet and good, and in the morning we fried them cut in thin strips, crisp as bacon. In the smooth water, we checked the compass and found the deviation was still inconsistent for no apparent reason, and the spectre of Hector’s black superstition was aboard again.

It was early in May, and tomorrow we would sail north and in a few days would meet the sun coming south. Each noon the shadow of the mainmast on deck was shorter, but we revelled in the tropical warmth and stripped down to our Tahitian *pareus* again for the first time in many months. Just north of the Chesterfields we

would cross our old course of last August from the New Hebrides to Brisbane and complete our long circle of the Coral Sea. Then we could look forward with pleasant anticipation to mysterious New Guinea and mail from home at Samarai.

The only disharmony aboard was caused by the large duck we had signed on in Lord Howe Island. Hector, whose job it was to scrub the decks each day, fixed glittering eyes of hate on the fat, contented duck who waddled up and down the deck like a short, fat woman in a bustle, slept under the dinghy at night, and did an amazing job of streaking the decks with white and green and yellow. Gerry and I were rather fond of the duck, but Hector addressed it as: "Zees God-damn duck." Every morning for days, Hector had sharpened his long knife on the oilstone and then, testing its razor edge by shaving a patch of hair from his arm, had asked:

"Capitan, when I go keel zees God-damn duck, zees dearty bird?"

On the morning we sailed from the Chesterfields, I pronounced the death sentence on the duck. Hector, with fiendish glee and a clean shiny knife held the unfortunate duck over the rail and ever so slowly sawed back and forth across its throat, muttering:

"Now I go keel you, zees damn duck go for die! Hah!"

The head fell in the water and he held the flapping duck over the side. When his fun was over, he slowly plucked the feathers and Gerry made a stuffing from broken sea biscuit, chopped onion, sage, sea-fowl eggs, and diced bacon. With the duck in the hot oven, we lifted the anchor on deck and sailed fair wind across the lagoon, and the islets quickly dropped from sight. On the western side with a forty-mile sweep of wind it was rough; but, once out through the pass, the sea was calm in the lee and the wind, unobstructed, was fresh; we boiled along a few hundred feet from the steep coral wall, out of soundings in blue-black water. Following the line of reef northward with two stout troll lines trailing we caught barracuda as long as Hector, while waiting for the duck to roast. But the sharks came and we lost one good line and I had to stop the fishing, even in the face of threatened revolution from Mexico. Then, before dark, we squared for the Louisiade Archipelago, a chain of high islands and reefs off the eastern extremity of Papua, Australian-governed port of New Guinea. After four uneventful days we sighted the mountains, decapitated by their crown of clouds, of Sudest or Tagula Island, largest of the Louisiades.

In the afternoon we entered the pass and anchored in a large bay, named Dumaga on the chart. Protected by the dense green hills and ringed with coconuts and dark mangroves, it was quiet. Brown-thatched houses occasionally looked through the jungle and the water was muddy from a river that flowed through a deep valley into the head of the bay. With only one hundred and fifty miles to go, and most of the dangers behind us, I felt the pride of achievement: we had snaked through the reefs of the Coral Sea for seventeen hundred miles and were safe in another land that smelt of damp earth and wood smoke. We were over two years from our home port—the original crew was still aboard and healthy, and the ship was sound, even if the hull was black.

A canoe came from the shore with four paddlers and two men standing upright, carving two spreading ripples across the still bay. They headed for the ship. The natives, from copper-brown to black with heavy mops of bushy hair, were naked except for a gee-string and sennit-like bands tight around their arms. Their teeth were black and their lips dark red from chewing betel nut. Pidgin English is the commercial language of New Guinea and we had remembered enough from the New Hebrides to trade some stick tobacco for eggs, melons, and coconuts. There were no white men in Dumaga Bay, but we were informed that in another bay, twenty miles to the eastward, was a lone white (Tabada). A lone white man was interesting and we asked if he grew coconuts. They shook their heads and pronounced the one word, “Gold,” and the monotonous jungle was transformed into a magic land. I could scarcely wait until daylight to sail that twenty miles and see one man wrest gold from rugged green Tagula. In the morning we got underway and, with a lookout aloft, coned the ship down through the coral-infested lagoon and anchored in a long narrow bay as close to its head as the water allowed, which was a good half-mile offshore. But not a sign of life did we see and the jungle was still as death.

Rowing towards shore in the dinghy we saw a large outrigger canoe emerge from a break in the mangroves. As they passed close by, we asked directions about “house belong Tabada,” and they pointed to the hole in the green wall of jungle.

“Fifty years ago,” said Gerry, “we wouldn’t dare do this.”

“Or maybe less than that. They’re a wild looking lot and I’d hate to be shipwrecked here right now because they would probably swarm over us like a flock of buzzards on a dead cow.”

A little stream opened up and the trees met overhead. A crocodile splashed in from the bank as we entered the tunnel, and we worked upstream in the muggy heat for well over a mile until we ran into a ten-foot waterfall by a wooden landing. We made fast and climbed the steep bank. A few thatched houses on pilings were spotted on either side of a path and black faces eyed us curiously; under the dwellings, mangy dogs, their ribs starved through their skin, snapped at flies; a few pigs lay inert in the heat or wandered about looking for food, their nostrils blowing up little swirls of dust. On a hill in the centre of a clearing, we were relieved to see an unpainted frame structure with rickety steps leading up to a partially enclosed veranda on one side. A man in dungarees, bare feet, and a wide straw hat came out of the house and introduced himself as Harry Morley and led us to the veranda, where we accepted his offer of tea. He was not curious about where we were from, so I said: "We're just up from Sydney."

"Sydney, eh?" He went to a cupboard and dug out a tin of milk. "So you're from Sydney?"

"Not originally. We started from America, went down through the Panama Canal, and then across the Pacific to Australia."

"America, eh?" A native appeared with a pot of tea with the end of the spout broken off. "Milk?" asked Harry Morley.

We gratefully sipped the hot liquid mixed with the thick, sweetened milk and look around the shack at the crude homemade furniture and Morley's weather-beaten face.

"We stopped at Dumaga Bay and the natives said that you were a prospector. . . . Do you wash gold out of the streams?" asked Gerry.

"Yes, I pan a little gold, enough to live on and pay me boys," he said; and, swallowing the last of his tea, added, "But that ain't what I'm after. I'm tryin' to locate a reef and I'll find her someday." He stood up and paced the floor and, seeing the fight of interest in our faces, continued, "I found a rock on a high ridge back here and, Captain, it had no business bein' there. So I chipped off a piece and sent it south for an assay an' the report come back high! It was a hell of a big rock, several tons, and I know nobody carried her up there. It must of been a piece broken off from a reef. So I said to myself, 'Here's where I stay until I find her, and I'm going to locate her some day.' "

“How long ago was that?” I asked.

“About thirty-five years right here on Tagula, but I been prospectin’ longer ’an that. I came out from London in a squarerigger when I was younger than you chaps. Then I worked the islands as supercargo on a schooner until I got a small boat o’ me own and I made good money tradin’ tobacco for copra. But when they started findin’ gold in New Guinea and the islands around here, I got the bug bad an’ I been prospectin’ ever since. And here’s where I make my big strike. . . .” He smiled. “I’ve been sayin’ that for thirty years, ever since I found that rock.”

Morley, stomping around the shack, made the floor tremble. He was perfectly sincere and I knew he would die alone on Tagula Island before he would give up this single quest. His path through life was as deep as a rock-walled gorge from which he could not deviate.

I asked. “Would you care to come off to the ship and have a drink?”

Although the ship was less than two miles away, he refused with the same attitude of impossibility as he would use if I had asked him to visit me at once in Des Moines, Iowa. He explained that he used to go to Samarai every few years and get drunk with his fellow prospectors and traders, but now he never left the place. I suspected that he felt old age was creeping up and there would be less time to spend on his quest for the gold-bearing reef.

“Did you ever see gold, Captain?” he asked; and, unlocking a cupboard full of medicine, ammunition, and shaving equipment, brought out a test tube of heavy yellow dust. “About a hundred quids’ worth,” he said, weighing it in his hand. Then abruptly, “Come on, and I’ll show you how I get it.”

We stood up from the boxes that served for chairs and followed him up a well-worn trail along the stream for a few minutes, then climbed out of the valley to a ridge. Morley pointed to a large rock embedded in the soft clay soil. “That’s it,” he said simply. Here was his thirty-year fixed star, an inert mass of ore-bearing rock. The hills all around were scarred with ditches and I was amazed at the magnitude of the work. As we continued from one ravine to another, I saw mute testimony of his years of back-breaking labour: log dams were staggered up the watercourses, “catchments,” and sluice boxes littered the ravines. The hills were honeycombed with races and, as the island was only forty miles long, I wondered if he intended honeycombing all of Tagula. In several places



natives were working, and he called a boy to bring a shovel and a pan. He said to me, "Now, Captain, I'll show you some gold." The boy dug a shovelful of clay and gravel from a "catchment " and worked it slowly in a pan. The water carried off the dirt and, after a few minutes, the pan was almost clean and a few yellow specks were left, tiny pieces of gold lay in the bottom.

"Not much here," said Morley. "But after a rain there will be plenty washed down. These hills are full of gold because it keeps on washing down each rain, and someday I'll find the source."

And he did. Months later when we were about to leave Samarai, it was rumoured that Harry Morley was off the reservation and drunk in a saloon in Misima, an island to the northward where one of the biggest gold mines in New Guinea territory employs over a hundred white families. In his cups, he told of his rich strike on Tagula. Later the rumour was confirmed. He had found his reef. Morley wrote a letter to our home address, which eventually reached us in Singapore. He was rich beyond all expectations and he said that if he ever got into shoes he would come to Des Moines and see us. But somehow the letter was depressing because I could not think what he could do with the rest of his life. His star had gone out, he was seventy-five years old, and I was afraid that the fun had gone out of his life; his heart and soul would never leave his diggings on lonely Tagula; his stream had reached the sea and was lost.

## Chapter XXI

**ON MAY 15**, we sailed from Tagula, crossed the huge lagoon and put to sea, skirting the great barrier-reef that encircles most of the Louisiades. The wind was light from east-southeast, with a moderate sea. Eleven degrees south of the Line it was hot and we lazied along to the westward with the squaresail set as well as the main; the mizzen was full but the headsails were blanketed and flopped idly, rattling the hanks on the stays; and, hunting the shade, we longed for the cool of the night. Tagula disappeared in the haze, but an occasional reef island off to starboard marked our slow progress. The light breeze was steady all day and all night, and the next noon position showed us a hundred miles on our way. In the afternoon it fell calm and we drifted along the barrier-reef at a mile or two each hour. There was not a cloud to shade the sun and I thought the decks would burn; but tomorrow we would be in Samarai, reading our mail on some shady veranda or in the cool darkness of a pub.

Just before dark we had a definite fix. The low Sable Islands bore due north, and at sunset it was possible to see the silhouette of high Basilaki Island forty miles away. There was no doubt, tomorrow would find us in port. Our fresh food was gone and we ate a usual ship's dinner in the warm cabin, with the perspiration running off our noses. After dinner Gerry and I sat in the cockpit and sipped tea and smoked. It was a dead, still, moonless night; some stars were visible so low on the horizon that they looked like fixed red lights.

"As soon as Hector finishes washing up below, I think I'll start the engine," I said.

"You might as well, Coppy; I am not particularly anxious to lie out here another day."

"No, neither am I. There's plenty of gas aboard and we can get in first thing in the morning."

"It's about seventy some miles, isn't it?"

"Just about. Twenty miles will clear the last of the barrier. But we'll stay on this

westerly course for thirty or thirty-five at least before we steer northwest.”

I went below and consulted the chart and found that thirty-five miles on our present course would clear the last bit of reef by seventeen miles; and then on the northwesterly course there would be no dangers except those marked by high land. Daylight would find us not far from port.

At seven o'clock I started up the motor and we exploded along through the windless night. Hector brought a blanket on deck and I went forward to avoid the noise and smell and lay on the gently vibrating decks listening to the swish of the bow wave as the stern bit into each long Pacific swell until I went to sleep.

Gerry called me at midnight and went below to try sleeping forward. Hector was shrouded like a corpse in the starboard waterways. The phosphorescence in the water rivaled the sky and, hypnotized by the binnacle light reflected on the compass card, I felt we were travelling up and down gentle slopes of space in a galaxy of stars.

The ship's clock tinkled two bells and I stood up and looked all around. There was not a breath of air. I walked around the deck to keep awake and then read the log in the flickering light of a match. We had made the thirty-five miles in six hours. Not bad, I thought, for the old tractor engine, throttled down, to average five and a half knots. I ducked below for a quick look at the chart and I was satisfied that we were well clear of all dangers. There were no current arrows except a little set along the reef with the direction of the prevailing monsoon. On deck, I looked around again and then twisted the wheel a few spokes to starboard until the triangular N.W. mark on the compass pointed the rhumb line. The drooping canvas was ghostly in the starlight.

For an hour I sat, listening to the monotonous firing of the engine, fighting sleep. The ship's clock struck four times and I stood up and stretched my legs. Two hours more and I would call Hector. I walked forward and looked at the water and was surprised at the number of fish that flashed away from the boat, leaving a trail of sparks like a comet. Back in the cockpit, I fit a cigarette and thought of Sydney and Lord Howe and Harry Morley digging up the hillsides on Tagula; and I wondered what New Guinea was like and the East that lay beyond Torres Strait. ...

Gently, without a sound, I felt a soft thud on the cockpit underfoot. The *Hurricane*'s speed slackened ever so little. I jumped up in alarm to look over the side. Just as I reached the mizzen shrouds, I saw a black wall of water rise up over the stern—and then I heard the roar of breakers. Our stern rose to the sea and we crashed headlong on a coral reef. The next sea turned her broadside and broke clear over the ship. Hector clung, cat-like, to the stanchion rail and Gerry shot out of the companionway, followed by a dense cloud of white smoke. Fire shot out of the exhaust. The propeller, racing, wildly, vibrated the ship.

“The engine!” I yelled, cold with the fear of a fire, and started below.

All the lockers in the galley had burst open and a gallon jug of carbon tetrachloride had smashed on the hot motor. At least there would be no fire. Choking from the gas, I turned off the motor and then I felt the boat lift and crash down and the port side sprung in, buckling the bulkhead forward. Water was over my knees and, when the ship rolled down again, the sloshing water hissed on the hot manifold. On deck, wave after wave broke over the ship, and each time she was lifted farther upon the reef until she lay on her port side at an angle of forty-five degrees, with her stern to the sea. Silently we took in the sails and lashed the helm amidship. There was nothing else to be done.

I went below with Gerry and found the water was over the bunks; and, when a wave came in, the sea poured through the ports on the down side. We rescued the chronometer and sextant, the camera and the negatives, and stowed them in a high locker above the level of the deck.

“What is to be done?” asked Gerry quietly.

“Nothing,” I said. “Nothing until daylight. . . . And then we’ll see.”

I groped around in the familiar darkness and rescued some dry matches from the chart table and a few tins of Capstan cigarettes and stowed them in the high locker with the sextant. Then, pushing through the waist-deep water at a dizzy angle, we climbed on deck.

There were no distress signals, no wireless, and there was no land! Cold and wet from the sea, we clung to the rigging and waited for the blessing of daylight. The tide was receding and the sea broke only under the counter. With each sickening thud, I involuntarily cringed as her unprotected ribs pounded painfully into the sharp rock. Then the boat lay quite still. She had given up her struggle with the

sea. The nightmare of shipwreck had come true. The bleak spars of the *Hurricane* canted across the starry sky. She was a dead thing and all the beauty had gone out of her.

“God! why won’t the daylight come!” I prayed, clinging to the rigging and feeling the boat grind out her life, groaning in protest as the sharp coral rock dug into her wounded side, when with deadly monotony the relentless sea smashed under the counter.

The ship’s clock struck the incongruously merry tinkle of three bells. It was 5.30; only three hours ago the broken ship was beautifully alive, faithfully ploughing her starlit wake to destruction. Light spreading faintly along the eastern horizon grew slowly brighter until the horizon all around was a delicate pink and a tiny black dot was silhouetted to the east of north. I marked the spot and on the steep deck checked a bearing by the compass; then I went down the companionway and the cold dark water closed over my waist. I worked forward through the confusion of floating debris and, by the deathly pale light of dawn, looked at the water-soaked chart. We were directly on the centre of Uluma Reef, an isolated semicircle of coral, and the nearest land, the dot we saw from aloft, was Wari Island, twelve miles away!

If the weather stayed calm, we could save our lives; but, if the southeast came back, there was only the slightest chance that three men could cross that stretch of open sea in a ten-foot flat-bottom dinghy. The ship would not break up for days, but she would not last for weeks; and, on this trackless waste of water and reef, a passing ship would be an accident too remote for speculation.

But now that daylight lit the ghastly scene, I concentrated on the task at hand. We would abandon ship. First, I put the ship’s papers and our money in a little green tin lock box and filled a jug of water from the after tank. I told Gerry to dig out three life preservers, and Hector to bring up the oars.

As the sun came up bright orange in a clean sky, hope returned. Maybe we could get help and salvage the ship. The sea is as unpredictable as human nature and anything could happen. But when I looked out beyond the lee of the reef where the sea, running in, made the horizon lumpy, I prayed, “Please, God, don’t send the wind!”

“Let’s go,” I said abruptly. “We’ll carry the skiff forward to launch her and make

the painter fast to the end of the bowsprit.”

Silently we slid the skiff over the bow and she trailed on a long line from the sprit, buoyantly riding the surf. Gerry, faithful to his time, had the chronometer in his shirt pocket; Hector took his toothbrush and comb; and I hooked one finger in the water jug and with the other hand clutched the green money box and a tin of cigarettes. With life preservers donned and our few belongings held high overhead, we jumped in the surf, worked back to the dinghy and climbed in over the stern. Hector, the lightest, perched in the bow and Gerry sat amidship, while I, with my feet in the water, depressed the stern so the bow would rise over the surf. We waited a moment for a moderate sea, then let go the line; I jumped into the skiff and we paddled backwards until clear of the breakers. Then we turned the dinghy around and headed across the lagoon in the general direction of north-east. The bottom of the lagoon was as though under glass, and fish and the fantastic shapes of staghorn coral, colourful-lipped giant clams, and purple sea fans passed beneath the dinghy with the regular squeak and click of the oarlocks. Close to the western hook of the reef, we felt the rise and fall of the slick swells. In shifts of a half-hour, each man took his turn at the oars and pulled for all he was worth, for if the wind came back there was little chance that the skiff would live in the ten miles of open Pacific between us and the invisible land. The stern of the little dinghy was only three inches out of the water! The sky was encouraging; there was not a cloud in sight, but the sun bore relentlessly down and the half-hour trick on the oars left us breathless and bathed in perspiration.

Beyond the protecting reef the sea peaked up high in a tide race and occasionally a little water slopped over the stern and we bailed out with a bent coffee tin. Silently we worked: bailing and rowing. The spars of the *Hurricane* were lost from view, but the saddle-shaped green hill on little Wari Island was now clearly visible.

Close by, a triangular fin cut the water and the long brown shadow of a shark passed under the boat. A school of flying fish jumped out of a sea ahead and another brown shadow appeared, cruising along slowly with the direction of the boat. A sea steeper than usual lumped up ahead.

“Ease up!” I shouted. Gerry paused, with the oars trailing aft. But the slender nose of the dinghy dug into the steep green sea and gallons poured over the bow.

“For God’s sake, don’t move!” I yelled, and slowly reached for the coffee tin floating around in the bottom of the boat. I bailed steadily, careful not to shift my weight. There was less than two inches of freeboard and we sat frozen, rising and falling over the uneven sea. Then again with the steady click-clack of rowlocks, we pulled desperately for the shore. For the moment the shipwreck was forgotten in the desire to reach the safety of dark green solid land ahead.

We were close! I could see the sand beach, and the motionless palms that leaned seaward, from the top of each swell. A mile! Then a half-mile! Breakers ahead! A barrier-reef curved out to sea from dumbbell-shaped Wari Island, and behind lay the dead smooth water of the narrow lagoon. Two native cutters rode at anchor and canoes were pulled up on the beach. I stood up in the stern and looked at the line of surf. There was no pass in sight. The tide was low and the reef dried between each sea. A strong current was setting us westward and the water boiled over the uneven bottom.

“We’ll jump her,” I said. “Pull straight in with the next sea.”

We hovered off the line of break for a minute and then rushed in on a wave and jumped out of the boat when she touched the coral; and we dragged her across with the next surge and shoved her in the smooth lagoon.

We rested a minute—our backs and arms were tired—and we passed around the lukewarm jug of water. It was ten o’clock. Gone was the stark fear for life, but the nightmare of shipwreck came back and I knew the tragedy of failure.

“We’ll get her off, Coppy,” said Gerry.

But only by the grace of God and a long spell of calm weather could the feat be attempted.

“We’ll try,” I said. “We’ll damn well try! Giver her hell, Hector.” And the little Mexican braced his feet on the thwarts and pulled, with the sweat running over his expressionless face.

Black figures dotted the white sand and the raised, brown-thatched houses showed through the grey trunks of the coconut palms. The boat scraped the sand and we looked up at the circle of faces around us. Naked, tattooed Papuans with bushy hair, sullen eyes, and betel-nut-stained lips, their ear lobes pendent, gazed curiously at the three strange men in a little black skiff. Behind the circle of men,

women with huge breasts and bustling grass skirts were chattering like monkeys. Then a native in a red sarong, held up by a leather belt, stepped forward, and crudely tattooed across his chest was "WILLIAM ST.", which is a well-known street in Sydney. I pointed in the direction of Uluma Reef, and he nodded his head sadly. His version of pidgin English was easy to understand and he told us that years ago a steamer had wrecked on that same reef and her crew had come ashore in boats just as we had. Then he asked if we were hungry and we said, "yes"; and he led us through the village to the largest house, which was part frame and part thatch with a board floor. We had hot tea with sweetened milk and store biscuits, and discussed the possibility of returning at once to the reef. I had my eye on the two twenty-foot, pot-bellied cutters and I asked William to get a crew of boys to take us back to the reef. Fatigue was forgotten with the hope of salvaging the outfit and the possibility of saving the ship if I could get into the port of Samarai to get help.

Just before noon we left with the two cutters and a whale-boat crowded with Wari Islanders. A faint easterly breeze helped us down to the end of the narrow lagoon and out the pass. By alternately rowing and sailing in the occasional puffs of wind, we reached the wreck in less than four hours. There was less sea, and with the low tide the force of the break was a ship's length beyond the stem. When the cutters were anchored a hundred yards from the wreck in still shoal water of the lagoon, the boys jumped out and waded over the sharp coral bottom to the *Hurricane*. She lay just as we had left her, the red copper paint on the starboard scarcely scratched; but the port side down on the reef was badly holed, and the greasy high watermark in the cabin was evidence that the tide went in and out of the ship. Below was a mess: sugar, rice, flour, and tobacco blended with the bilge water and oil from the engine; bunk boards, kapok pillows, and boxes of matches floated through the main cabin.

"God! what a hell hole," I said to Gerry, and we went to work tossing things on deck. Clothing and blankets were wrung out; water-logged mattresses; tinned goods with the labels washed off; galley equipment, tools, and all removable fixtures, even the cabin lamps and the ship's clock, were unscrewed and passed out the companionway to the natives who piled the load on their heads and waded back through the surf to the boats. Frantically we worked in the last few hours of daylight.

At sunset a light breeze came from a dark mass of clouds to the eastward and William St. said a squall was coming. We would have to leave the reef. In the



last of the light we sailed away and the canted spars of the *Hurricane* were lost in a rain squall that drove the cutters deep in the water. I knew that if this squall was a herald of the southeast trades, it would be the last of any ship exposed to the full sweep of the Pacific Ocean. But in an hour the stars came out and the wind died and hope was born again. It was midnight when we reached Wari Island again and the strain of the last twenty-four hours was telling. As soon as we hit the floor of William's house, we went sound asleep with mosquitoes buzzing in our ears.

Daylight woke us up and we went to the beach, washed in the salt water and watched the sun come up in clear sky. The lagoon was a sheet of glass and the roar of the surf on the reef was no louder than when we had jumped it in the skiff the day before. The salvage from the wreck had been carried to a house and piled high on the raised floor of parallel poles; Hector was asleep on the very top of the pile of gear. But I could see at a glance that a great deal more had been taken in the cutters than had found its way ashore. William feigned distress, but when he was presented with a bright green sarong, he went to work and odds and ends mysteriously appeared. It took more threats than bribes, however, to get back two pairs of binoculars. It was a day's work sorting and drying our outfit in the sun, and the shrinkage was much less serious than the damage. But many consumable items like tinned-beef could never be returned without the aid of a stomach pump.

On Wednesday morning, just forty-eight hours after the wreck, the southeast wind came back and I left the island with William and three hands in his cutter for Samarai. Gerry would make one more trip to the reef for the rest of the gear, and with help from port I would make an attempt to drag the lifeless twenty-odd tons of ship over the reef. Soon after we were under way, it rained, and I went below in the hold, but the smell of rotten copra and the monstrous cockroaches drove me out, and I shivered on the unprotected deck until the sun was an hour high.

Samarai is an island less than a mile long, just off the mainland of New Guinea, and only one hundred and fifty Europeans populate Papua's second port. Before noon the cutter rounded up in the lee of the town and coasted alongside the jetty. I stepped ashore in dirty white ducks, with several days' growth of beard, clutching the little green tin box that held my only worldly possessions. The natives on the cutter had shouted the news ashore and a man, stepping out on the jetty from a store, introduced himself as Bob Bunting and said, "We're

glad to see you, but this is a hell of a way to arrive in port.”

I agreed and told briefly of Gerry and Hector on Wari Island and the ship on Uluma Reef. I was tired and looked it, for Bunting said, “Come up home for a shave and a bath and let me know what I can do for you.”

“Thanks,” I said. We walked up the white coral road to a large bungalow where, once inside, Bob shouted, “Eh!” and a boy appeared in a white sarong and my immediate troubles were over.

Shaved and bathed and in Bob Bunting’s clean clothes, I looked over the shipping and found that the *Tolema*, a fifty-foot Diesel-powered mission boat, was available. Then we had a conference with an Arthur Evanett, better known as “Little Arthur,” who, as Bob’s partner, operated a fleet of *beche la mer* and trochus shell luggers as well as a trading schooner. “Little Arthur” agreed to give us a hand and furnish one of his luggers and about twenty boys. From Bunting’s store we borrowed anchors, bars, rope, heavy tackles, lumber, canvas, and oakum; and, with two sacks of rice for the boys, we loaded the *Tolema*.

In the morning the southeast was fresh and I was afraid that we would be too late. The *Tolema*, bucking the strong breeze, made painfully slow progress toward the wreck; and, as I watched the breaking green seas and the heavy tide-rips, I realized how our lives had been dependent upon the calm weather in that twelve-mile row in our tiny dinghy. Late that afternoon we anchored over the banks in the lee of Uluma Reef, loaded our salvage gear in dinghies, and, with a dozen boys, we rowed to the wreck.

The seas were pounding under the counter again and Arthur said, “If she don’t come within the next twenty-four hours, she’ll never come off!”

Kedge anchors were taken out in the lagoon and, with the fall of a four-part block and tackle around the drum of the *Hurricane*’s windlass and the double block shackled on the chain, we took a good strain on the bow to prevent her working sideways on the reef. Then two other anchors were buried on the reef by digging up the rock with iron bars, and a tackle was made fast to a sling on both the main and the mizzen masthead. We worked until midnight, setting the stage for tomorrow.

At daylight on Friday morning we attempted to heave her over on the undamaged starboard side. The fall of the tackle from the mainmast was led

around the windlass and the other tackle from the mizzenmast was hooked to the mainsheet; and, with two men forward on the bar and the rest of the crew on the tackle aft, we managed to lift the port side about six inches, when the anchors pulled out of the reef and she settled back again. Then we dug deeper holes in the reef, piled loose rock on the anchors and drove iron bars ahead of the flukes; then, with "Little Arthur" shouting time, the boys pulled in unison, and slowly the port side lifted until the decks were almost level. Then bunk boards and the decking below were ripped out and nailed on the starboard side to protect the undamaged planking; and then, with another strain on the masthead tackles, we held her on balance. When the next big sea came over the reef, Arthur shouted; and with one more heave on the tackles she fell over on her good side, cushioned by the incoming sea. Then quickly, before the tide came in, we went to work on the port side. From the garboard to above the waterline, thirteen strakes of planking were literally chewed off and in several places the rocks had broken through between the frames, but the frames were intact. Oakum and tar were jammed in the holes, canvas tacked on, and the whole side was covered with one-by-six sheeting. Then tons of iron ballast were thrown out on the reef and the ship pumped dry, and we took another strain on the bow line and waited for the tide. Gerry came over from Wari Island in a cutter and reported that most of our gear was accounted for and Hector was standing guard. We were almost out of food, so he went with the *Tolema* back to Wari Island to load our outfit.

Arthur's lugger came in that afternoon and, with twenty more boys to help, we dug with bars a channel through the rock to fit the keel. With sunset, the tide came in and the seas broke high over the reef. Then inch by inch, with each surge, we kedged the ship over the coral. By midnight we had hauled her over a length and she was on the lee side, safe from the force of the break. Saturday morning we gained two more ship's lengths and she was definitely safe. By high tide that night, we floated her in the lagoon, and with a borrowed jib from Arthur's lugger we sailed into deep water and anchored alongside the *Tolema*, which had returned from Wari Island with Gerry and Hector and our gear and supplies aboard. The *Hurricane* floated high and dry. Gone was the nightmare of shipwreck and the tragedy of failure. The ship had done the impossible by jumping an outside coral reef without breaking a bone.

Jubilant, we sat down to the first real meal in two days. Arthur and I had been living on a sticky mess of rice and giant reef clams, and tinned beef was heaven.

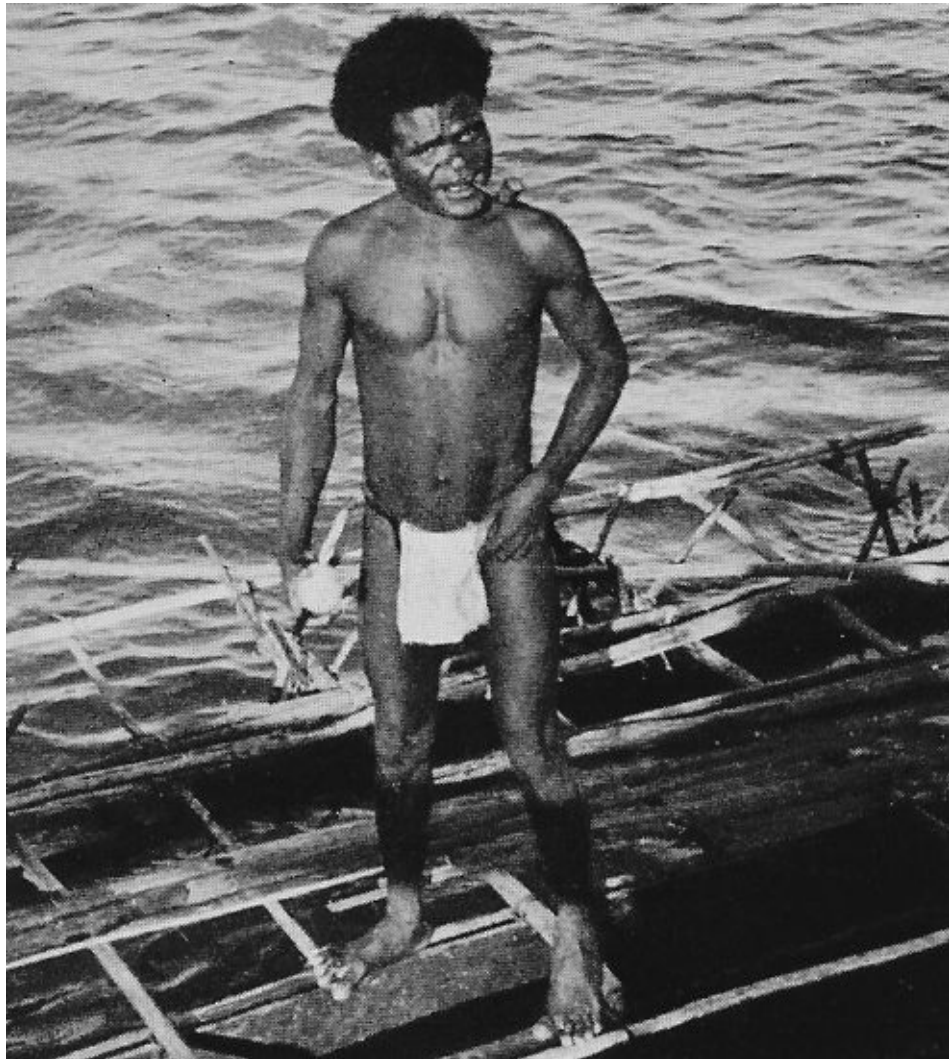
We bent the sails on the *Hurricane*, and just before midnight on Sunday we sailed gaily after the *Tolema*, westward bound again. The *Hurricane*, riding well above her waterline (most of her ballast could not be recovered because of the high sea on the reef), was alive again—a thing of beauty in the night, with the soft curves of her sails winged out against the stars.



*"She lay just as we left her - the port side down on the surf was badly holed and the greasy high-water mark in the cabin was evidence that the tide went in and out of the ship." - Shipwreck on Uluma reef.*



*A great contrast to smiling Polynesia are the Sudes islanders.*



*A grandson of cannibals, this Wari Islander helped salvage the Hurricane's gear.*



*A flying fox on Kiriwana, the Trobriands. The natives use them for food.*



## Chapter XXII

GINGER'S centre of gravity was low, due to his short legs under a waistline that measured far more than half of his height. He stood in the comparatively cool darkness of Ned's pub—outside the sun was blinding, reflected on the white coral streets of Samarai—with his feet firmly planted far apart, and asked, when he saw me steering for the rectangular bar, "How in the hell did you ever get the boat off that rock pile?"

"By the grace of God and the help of Little Arthur," I answered. "And the weather was made to order: when we prayed for a calm, it was calm; and when we whistled for a breeze to throw more water on the reef, the south-east came in fresh, just at the right time to help float her off."

"That's Yankee luck. . . . What will you have?"

"Scotch," I said.

Ginger gulped his drink and ordered two more, and we talked about his coconut plantation at the head of Milne Bay. He managed a ten-thousand-acre estate for a large English soap firm; and when the copra market had dropped, they had installed a coconut desiccating factory and even branched out into cattle, until Ginger had his hands full riding herd on four hundred head of zebu.

"I'm sailing back to the estate today," he added. "Why don't you and your partner come along? . . . It's only six and a half hours."

The *Hurricane* was on the slip over on Sariba Island, just across the strait, in the able hands of Anzac, Tom Platt; and I guessed, from my observed speed of New Guinea labour, that she would be there for some time.

"Thanks," I said. "I would like very much to go and I know Gerry would. He's been down with dengue fever and the change will do him good."

"Dengue's a bastard," said Ginger, "but it doesn't recur like malaria."

"When are you sailing?"

“As soon as I’m loaded.”

“You or the lugger?”

“Both. . . . Ned! two more.”

A card game in the corner of the pub was noisy, and at one end of the bar trading-boat skippers, planters, and prospectors were playing a game with six dice, called “two bob in.” As five o’clock drew near, the pub, filling up, was rapidly reaching the before-dinner crescendo. We sent a boy up to Bob Bunting’s, where we were living, for Gerry, who came in shortly, tagged by smiling black Eli in his white sarong (*lap-lap*), carrying a suitcase. Gerry looked strangely pale; his bronze complexion seemed to have washed out during the long nights of perspiration following the attack of fever.

“Hi, Coppy,” he said. “I hear we’re going visiting.”

Ginger said, “You’re looking fit. Try a gin and tonic.”

Then he looked at his watch and said it was time to leave. But we had one more for the road and then one for the swing of the door before we walked out and down to where Ginger’s boat, the *Gilli-Gilli*, a sixty-five-foot Diesel-powered lugger, was unloading alongside the jetty.

When the last of the cargo, cases of desiccated coconut, was stacked on the wharf, we moved aboard and Ginger barked orders to his black, ape-faced skipper regarding the loading of the few cases of tinned goods and the careful stowing of a case of whisky and one of gin. I said to Gerry that Ginger was taking no chances of running dry thirty-five miles from the nearest source of supply.

Across China Straits, the sun went into the hills on the mainland, and the blessing of twilight erased the hard shadows from Samarai’s streets. The wind was dead and the shipping, Thursday Island luggers, deep in the water with red mangrove logs, *beche la mer* boats, trading schooners, and high-sided motor vessels with their box-like superstructures, rode quietly over their reflections. Native women with bustling grass skirts, naked above, blue with tattooing, squatted in front of Bunting’s store; police boys, proud but perspiring in their heavy, red-trimmed, blue uniforms, herded a group of happy prisoners up the street—for jail to a native in Samarai meant the heaven of regular meals each

day and protection from their enemies back in their villages. The few stores and houses, the Residency, and the hospital on the hill constituted just twelve hundred yards of civilization; and across China Straits, New Guinea stretched twelve hundred miles to the westward, and all its seaports, towns, plantations, and gold mines totalled a white population of less than five thousand. There are no roads, railroads, or telegraph wires in this entire expanse of mountainous jungle. Three hundred thousand square miles of dense green, broken only by the brown snaky, lowland rivers and the naked ridges and snow-capped peaks of mountains fifteen thousand feet above the sea.

The engine throbbed, vibrating the canvas deck chairs on the after deck under the awning; the sails, black with mildew and exhaust smoke, were hoisted to catch the light easterly breeze. North through China Straits we breasted the four-knot tide, then steered westward into Milne Bay, narrow as a drowned valley that penetrated the land, splitting Papua's eastern peninsula. It was a new delight: sailing without responsibility; and I silently watched the panorama of the jungle that reached from the sea to the misty blue highlands, where an occasional cascade marked the steep green wall with a long line of silver. Astern, a canoe, her bat-winged sail black against the reflected light, hung motionless against the eastern horizon. It was the symbol of New Guinea.

With darkness, life was confined to the after deck within the circle of light; and Ginger, his red hair and paprika complexion cooling in the breeze, told us stories of murders, warfare, and cannibalism in the bush.

"But the thing that makes one's blood boil," he said, "is the New Guinea 'ice boxes.'"

"What is a New Guinea 'ice box'?" asked Gerry.

"A method of preserving live meat," continued Ginger. "And it isn't an uncommon practice in the mandated territory toward the Dutch border. There is a bad lot o' niggers there who raid other villages, burn them to the ground, and carry off the survivors and put 'em on *ice*. They have cages built on pilings, and their victims are kept alive by forced feeding. A hollowed bamboo is thrust down their throats and mashed food is poured in; and when they are good and fat they amputate a leg, stop the bleeding, and carefully tend the wound. Then they eat the other leg and then the arms; and when the victim dies they have the *big kai kai* and roast the head and body. Sometimes a successful village will have

dozens of these ‘ice boxes’ working at the same time and the boys are seldom without fresh human meat.”

“You should have saved that story for the dinner table,” I said, and I was secretly glad of my sailor’s stomach.

The engine slowed down and Ginger stood up and, peering into the darkness, announced, “We’re here!” Then the pilings of a jetty came within the light, and black figures, with lanterns swinging, ran over the rough boards and made fast the bow and stern lines. Incongruously, the twin beams of an automobile’s headlights looked through a forest of coconut palms.

“What do your boys call this thing?” I asked Ginger as we climbed in the car.

“Motor car,” he answered; “but they call an aeroplane: ‘*motorcar belong Jesus Christ.*’ ”

Gerry said, “I thought there were no roads in New Guinea?”

“Outside of the estate there are none; but ten thousand acres is too big a tract of land to walk around and, with labour at ten bob a month, it wasn’t much of a task to build a road. . . . The house is two miles from salt water.”

In the black night we drove up through a lane in the coconut palms, past the factory and machine shop, and then wound up a long hill to the steps in front of the house. Boys in white *laps-laps* ran down to assist their lord and master.

“How many hands have you in this establishment?” I asked.

“Nine,” said Ginger, “and two ‘small boys.’ ”

It was a large house and, inside, the central room, lined with ebony wood-carvings of squat figures, was like a museum of Papuan art.

“My wife,” said Ginger, “is visiting in the Solomon Islands, so make yourself at home and choose your own bed.”

The engineer and the overseer came in and all hands gathered around a small bar in the hallway next to the long dining room. I listened to the problems of running a plantation with four hundred unskilled savages, indentured labour at two

dollars a month plus four sticks of tobacco per head. Gathering coconuts, running the desiccating factory day and night in shifts, packing and shipping the snow-white product to decorate the cakes on Australia's tea tables, caring for the zebu cattle and the riding horses and maintaining equipment was routine work with definite and final results. But there was the infinite struggle against the jungle, whose jealous green fingers crept silently in on the square of land; and then there was the conflict of personalities, which was almost inevitable in isolation without a variance of companionship. But the internal struggle of a white man alone in a black man's world was an intangible difficulty, and the odds of heat and rain, recurring malaria, and possibly blackwater fever (a condition that disintegrates the red cells, and the life's blood flows out in the urine) were stacked against the planter. . . .

The siphon bottle ran dry with a hiss and gurgle, and then from the quiet recess of the kitchen I heard the soft thudding of bare feet on the hardwood floor, and a grinning boy appeared with a fresh cold siphon.

"Ginger," I said, "your boys are well trained."

"They should be," he said. "They've heard that sound with great regularity."

And the repetition of this one incident was the only diversion in our week's visit, because the rain came that night and continued, varying from a steady drizzle to a torrential downpour that thundered on the roof and swept across the veranda like spray over the bows of a hard-driven ship; and at daybreak the hills, like grey waves, rose out of the valleys of mist.

In the mornings, Ginger, with a raincoat over khaki shirt and shorts, made the rounds of the estate and waged his silent battle with disease and jungle; striding up the "coolie lines" of towering blacks, like a top-sergeant, both judge and doctor, he settled disputes and watched for the symptoms of dread dysentery that would thin his ranks of labour. But at night there was nothing but the rain and the hiss and gurgle of a siphon bottle running dry, which was inevitably followed by the patter of bare feet as the sleepy hands in the kitchen were startled into life. Usually the engineer or the overseer came in for an evening drink, talked shop, spoke longingly of the delights of Sydney, and left for their respective houses and their mosquito-netting-canopied bed to dream about their next leave, a year or two years hence. New Guinea, like the East, is a man's world; but unlike the East, no convenient arrangement can be made with the

number one houseman for a neat brown-skinned Malay, Siamese, or Eurasian woman, for the Papuans are mostly ugly, dirty, and often scaly with a prevalent skin disease.

But Ginger was an entertaining host, and the week, despite the rain, passed quickly. Another load of coconut was ready for shipment and we sailed with it out of Milne Bay, muddy with the discharge of swollen streams, out from under the low cloud bank to the sunshine over Samarai, which was as welcome as its twelve hundred yards of civilization.

Aboard the *Hurricane*, I found Hector sick with fever, but the work was progressing and shipwright Tom Platt was doing a good job. The old chewed and split planking had been torn off and the new planking was slowly closing in the gaping port side. A new magneto had been ordered from Sydney and was due in three weeks' time; with this exception, the engine had not suffered from its salt water bath. By July we could continue the voyage. In the meantime, it was pleasant living on the hospitality of trader Bob Bunting.

Then it was my turn for dengue, and for five days I lay in bed with a fever up to one hundred and four, preceded by chills and followed by perspiration and a dull pain in every bone and muscle. Faithful, smiling black Eli, Bunting's number one boy, administered quinine and aspirin, hot soup and tea. And when Ginger came back in the *Gilli-Gilli* I was up and about, but it was torture to move my eyes and my head continually ached from the hangover of dengue.

Again we were leaning over the bar, surrounding Ned, the publican, and Ginger said, "How would you and Gerry like to go to the Trobriand Islands?"

"When do we sail?" I answered.

"Tomorrow," said Ginger, "and bring your shotgun and we'll have some pigeon shooting."

Then he explained that he was going to Kiriwana in the Trobriands, which lay approximately two hundred miles northward, to trade stick tobacco for yams in order to supply his labour with the necessary amount of native food required by the government to augment their diet of ice and tinned beef.

"If we have time," he added, "we'll sail to Kitava Island and visit Cameron, the man of the moment, who runs a harem of twenty-five native girls."

We were anxious to see the Trobriands, which are reputed to be the most famous or infamous islands in the western Pacific. Also, I was curious about the trading expedition and wondered how the few pounds of tobacco I saw loaded on the *Gilli-Gilli* would be converted into many tons of yams.

In the morning we sailed north through China Straits. New Guinea was on the port hand and the off-lying islands, blocking the wind to starboard, were covered with green to their summits. Even the beaches were in shadow from the overhanging dense growth, and in the lowlands the bowlegged mangroves stepped out into the sea. There were six in the crew forward plus two of Ginger's houseboys, Joe and the cook, so there was nothing for the after guard to do but watch the water churning up astern. But I felt we were embarked on a useful purpose, and it was an inspiring contrast from the two years of utter useless wandering in a yacht; and I wished that with wood and canvas and sweat we could produce something more than a passage to the westward. As yachtsmen or tourists, we were a side-show, taking no part in life; and I thought seriously of rebuilding the *Hurricane* for a purpose in life: hauling cargo, diving for trochus shell, or trading among the islands.

Late that day we anchored among some off-lying islets, called the Dum-Dums, launched the dinghy from the davits astern, and rowed in under the shadow of a tiny island, taller than its two-hundred-foot diameter, and waited for the Torres Strait pigeons to roost with the sunset. Just before dark, the large slate-grey birds came in and the quiet was shattered by the explosion of twelve-gauge shotguns. The shooting was almost directly overhead and the erratic flight of the grey pigeons against the uncertain light of the darkening sky was such a difficult target that almost a box of shells was fired to bring down eight birds. But it was worth the effort, for that night aboard the *Gilli-Gilli* the cook turned out a stew that was so delicious that it governed the subsequent movements of the expedition to the extent that we anchored at night only where there was possible pigeon shooting.

We were underway early in the morning and Ginger's houseboy, weaving aft with a tray of tea, milk, and biscuits, awakened us with a soft, "Tabida, I bring um kai-kai." It was a calm morning, and a faint land breeze coming off the island close by smelled of the jungle; ahead, the peak of the great round volcanic island was lost in the clouds. A lookout aloft was conning the ship between patches of brown water, the sails fluttered uselessly, and in an hour the cool of the night was gone. Then we worked through a narrow pass between two large

islands and, standing out to sea to the northward, where the east wind was fresh and cool, soon raised the low Trobriand Islands, elevated coral reefs a hundred feet above the tide, and by noon we anchored close to the beach in the lee of flat Kiriwana.

The village chief came off at once, and Ginger put in his request for yams. After some bickering, they agreed upon a price and the chief departed. Soon the deserted beach was crowded and canoes were launched with yams piled on the platform between canoe and outrigger until the lugger was surrounded by the flotilla, awaiting their turn to come aboard. Scales were hung from the foresail boom and Con, the black skipper, weighed up the yams, exchange one and a half sticks of tobacco for each fifteen pounds. Fascinated, we watched the scene.

“The women with all their hair shaved off are married,” said Ginger, “but the ones with the mops are single. ... You see that man covered with soot? . . . He’s in mourning an’ has been rubbed with black ashes.”

There was a variety of faces. Some of them looked almost Polynesian, and others distinctly negroid.

The afternoon wore on and Ginger, squinting at the sun, announced that it was time to have a drink and a dose of quinine. “Joe!” he called, “You, both ends and the middle of a son-of-a-gun, bring um along whisky.”

The flotilla around the ship had not diminished, and the yams were weighed and stowed in copra bags and slung in the hold amidship.

“At this rate we’ll have a cargo by tomorrow,” said Ginger, reclining behind his round stomach in a deck chair, with his feet on the rail.

“Look!” I said. “Here comes the chief with his harem.”

Ginger turned slowly around. “They don’t have harems. That stuff is for sale.”

The canoe came alongside and the chief and six very young girls climbed over the rail and walked aft. The smallest, about four feet in height, scarcely developed, could not have been more than ten years old. The others, more fully matured, were but little taller and probably not much older. They were wide-eyed, frightened, yet curious children. Joe, the houseboy, stood by grinning,



while the chief, naked save for a gee-string and a medal on a thong around his neck, which bore the legend: "Village counsellor-Papuan government," auctioned off the girls at three sticks of tobacco per head, which is less than twenty cents.

"They're not much more per pound than yams," I said.

Said Ginger, still reclining with his head lower than his stomach, "You would get twenty years for this in Sydney!"

Then he told Joe to give three sticks of tobacco to the first girl to swim ashore. His Britannic Majesty's Papuan Village Counsellor looked disappointed; but the girls, excited over the prospect of a race, stepped out of their grass skirts, threw them in the canoe and, stark-naked, dived over the side and raced to the beach.

"Is this just an old Trobriand custom?" I asked.

"It is. You can have all the youngsters in the village; but if you touched one of those scaly old, shaved-headed gins, there would be war."

The next day, the news of the stupid white man that gave away tobacco just for swimming spread around the island; and we were entertained by a water carnival of brown-skinned mermaids, racing between ship and shore, until Ginger withdrew the tobacco prize. Then we went ashore and climbed over the elevated ridge of coral and walked to the village a short distance inland. The high-ridged thatched houses presented a row of curved triangular facades, windowless, with doors of plaited fronds, in a grove of coconut and betel-nut palms. The village smelled of wood smoke and fish. The natives, squatting in the dirt, paid little attention to the three strange white men; but sullenly chewed betel-nut and, with carved wooden paddles, dipped reef-lime out of decorated gourds with a stopper-handle made of a boar's tusk, and rubbed the white powder over their reddened gums and blackened teeth. Both men and women had perforated ear lobes, which were enlarged an inch in diameter and decorated with rings and pendants of shell. They were a mixed lot, running through all shades of brown and copper; and no wonder, with their custom of greeting visitors to the island.

We sailed for Samarai with a full cargo of yams. I was disappointed that there was not time to sail to Kitava and visit Cameron, the man of the moment, with

his harem of twenty-five women; but Ginger was anxious to return to his estate. With the trades fresh, we made good time until we entered the pass between the two islands; and then, with the large blocks of land to windward, the breeze was uncertain and the sails luffed to our own wind as the engine pounded the ship southward. The after guard lounged in deck chairs, and Joe and the cook brought aft trays of tea and bowls of steaming pigeon stew; it was an easy life, but we had accomplished a useful purpose in a hold full of yams, and I wished again that the *Hurricane* could be put to better use than sailing into sunsets.

Samarai was seething with excitement and the pubs were full. Four hundred miles to the northwestward on the island of New Britain, Rabaul, capital of northeast New Guinea, was smothered by a volcano. A tiny island in the harbour, only a few feet high, had risen in a day under a cloud of hot ashes to a mountain six hundred feet above the sea. Ashes and cinders were deep in the streets of the town, many natives had been killed, ships were left high and dry on land, and the harbour was choked with floating pumice stone. The water supply had been cut off and the residents were issued beer, wine, and even champagne. The town was evacuated both hilariously and sadly, but efficiently, with no loss of European lives. Then a few days later, a Burns Philp steamer, crowded with refugees bound for Sydney, caught fire at sea. Fortunately, the fire, kept under control, was eventually extinguished, and she came into Samarai with warped deck plates, blistered paint work, and a blackened hold.

But the tragedy that struck close to home was when the wireless operator received news that Amelia Earhart had been reported missing on her flight from New Guinea to Howland Island. A volcanic eruption was strange to me and far away; but I knew the feeling of helplessness of a ship in trouble at sea, and a plane would only be worse—a thing of beauty in the air, it is but an unmanageable structure on really rough water. And I think I knew the feeling of hopelessness when the engine spluttered and stopped, and below was a thousand miles of deserted wind-swept sea. But for our phenomenal piece of luck, one of the oldest methods of transportation might have ended at about the same time and within a few degrees of longitude of the newest.



*Repainting the water line after scraping the copper bottom in Durban, South Africa.*



*Mr. Krebs (the builder) was the proudest man in America when the Hurricane docked at Mobile.*

## Chapter XXIII

**THE** *Hurricane* was launched, copper-sheathed and reballasted with enough New Guinea rock to replace the iron lost on the reef. The bulkheads were scrubbed clean and our gear was stowed aboard. The trades were fresh, so fresh that the old coastal steamer, the *Papuan Chief*, was two weeks overdue on a passage of less than three hundred miles from Port Moresby to the leeward. It was late in July, and in September the wind would be gone, and ahead of us lay all of Netherlands India, three thousand miles from Torres Strait to Singapore.

When the *Papuan Chief* came in, with a crew as black as her topsides, her skipper told a tale of the head winds so strong that she ran low on coal, churning up the water while the bearings ashore changed only a little, and every night she was forced to anchor behind a hook in the barrier-reef while the crew went ashore and cut wood enough to burn for another day's steaming. For two weeks they had been at it, with no rest for the weary. There would be little doubt about a fast passage to the westward in the *Hurricane*.

Two months and two weeks after the wreck on Uluma reef, the ship's black hull under curved white sails slipped slowly away from Samarai in a rain that curtained the sunrise. South through China Straits, we sailed into a grey world beyond the lee of the near islands, where we rose and fell as the long Pacific swell surged in over the banks. Close-hauled, we smashed our way south as the wind and rain increased. Visibility was limited to a few hundred yards. A squall shrieked down on us from the southeast, burying the rail deep in water. Hector, for the first time in his nautical career, was seasick, and clung, retching, to the taut mizzen sheet; Gerry's face was the colour of the sea as he straddled the wheel, shivering; and I, debating whether to join Hector over the rail or hold it like Gerry, finally decided on the former. All hands were weakened from fever, and the chill of the rain was hard to endure.

"Coppy, you picked a beautiful day to go to sea," said Gerry. "Wait 'til we square off," I said, "and it won't be so tough with the weather behind us."

I noticed Hector still clinging to the mizzen sheet with his teeth chattering, and I sent him below to light the Primus and put the kettle on to boil.

“We’ll have tea after we slack off, and that won’t be long,” I told Gerry.

The water changed to a darker green, and then suddenly we were in the deep blue of off-soundings. I dived below for another look at the chart. We were well offshore. I warmed my hands over the Primus and lit a cigarette. It was cosy below listening to the moaning of the wind and the crash of the seas; I hated to go out in the weather, and, when I did, Gerry said, “The wind’s gettin’ stronger.”

“Hector! .... on deck,” I called.

“We’ll square off,” I said to Gerry, “as soon as Mexico drags out the carcass.” Then I worked aft and read the log.

“Slack off the main sheet!” I yelled at Hector, and I let the mizzen run silently through the wet blocks.

“Hold her on west.”

And downhill we ran, with a steep breaking sea on the quarter. I took the wheel from Gerry and settled down to the dismal prospect of a wet four-hour watch. Hector came up, agilely balancing a large enamelled cup of hot, strong tea with milk and sugar. It was a good tonic and I felt warm and pleasant. With a sound ship underfoot, it could blow and rain and blow some more and we would be safe as long as we kept the ship offshore. The thought of the wreck was strong in mind, and, with the invisible reef-bound coast of New Guinea to the northward, I unconsciously edged south of the course.

But the wind continued to increase, the sky was a dirty grey, and low wisps of scud raced by overhead. The ship, driven deep in the water by the press of sail, was cutting a wider and wider path of foam; an occasional sea would slop over the quarter and smash against the deck-house, and the spray felt warm in the cold, hard rain. Before dark we had a gale on our hands and the wind was whipping the tops from the seas and blowing them straight across the ship. Steering was difficult. She was angry at the gale bedevilling her quarter and wanted to run south and buck the wind and sea head-on in defiance. It was past time to shorten sail. I shouted for all hands. Gerry and Hector came out naked and clawed in the wet mizzen and then took in the jib, and with the staysail sheeted flat she raced westward, with the main boom lifting high and the canvas pressing hard against the shrouds. Into the black night we rolled and plunged. The wind howled aloft, sang through the shrouds and tore at the halyards. The

seas crashed all around. It was a wild night and the ship, anxious to be rid of the Pacific Ocean, made westing across the Papuan gulf at the rate of one hundred and ninety-five nautical miles from noon until noon. Then the weather cleared rapidly; the wind moderated, and in the clean washed sky the great 13,000-foot serrated backbone of Papua's Peninsula, 50 miles northeast, was as sharply defined as purple clouds on the horizon at sunset.

Then the wind died, and we rolled miserably until the sea flattened out and a light easterly breeze drew us across the last of the Pacific Ocean toward the entrance of Torres Strait, which is marked by a small unlighted beacon on Bramble Cay. Our skipper friends in Samarai had said, "You can't miss Bramble Cay. If you're too far south, you'll see land; and, if you're too far north, the water will be muddy from the Fly River." Before sunrise, our dead reckoning from yesterday's position placed us within a few miles of Bramble Cay; but at daylight the island was not there, and from the mast the horizon all around was blank, and the water was dirty. We steered south, and before Gerry could take a latitude to cross the morning Summer line, we picked up Bramble Cay. The worst headaches in the ocean, the uncertain currents, had set us twenty miles north of the course over night. It was the last trick up the Pacific's sleeve, for the reefs at the end of the great Australian barrier were to windward, and we slipped along southwest in the sheltered waters of Torres Strait to an anchorage in the lee of a little deserted cay.

In the morning the southeast came in strong and we made a daylight sail of one hundred nautical miles to an anchorage off Wednesday Island. The next morning we made port and dropped the hook among the fleet of pearling luggers at Thursday Island. Port Kennedy, unpainted, stretched along the beach, parched by the dry southeast monsoon. Prosperity had gone with the price of shell. But rich in tradition, its history was the history of the sea. For four centuries the ships from Torres' own high-sided Spanish galleon, Cook's *Endeavour*, Bligh's longboat sent adrift by the mutineers of the *Bounty* three thousand miles to the eastward, pirates, explorers, privateers, Dutchmen, Portuguese, Yankee whalers, Japanese poachers, and even the bat-winged sails of the Strait's Island savages on head-hunting expeditions, preceded steam from the east and from the west through Torres Strait with the prevailing monsoon.

The second day in port, Gerry and I were down below sorting over charts of the East Indies, marking the probable course past strange named places ending harshly in *ung* and *ok*, that rang like a bell; where before, the Pacific names,

usually ending in *a*, *o*, *eu*, and *i*, were as softly melodious as the trade winds across an atoll; when Hector shouted wildly:

*“Capitan! Capitan! Barco Americano. Barco muy grande y muy bonito!”*

We scrambled out on deck and watched the schooner *Yankee* sail in the pass and round up and anchor. As soon as the port authorities had given her pratique, we went aboard. She was a two-hundred-ton vessel, an old North Sea pilot schooner in beautiful condition, owned by Captain Irving Johnson, and manned with one paid hand, the cook, and roughly twenty paying hands from the ages of sixteen to twenty-five, including two girls. His wife and two-year-old son were aboard. This was the *Yankee's* second trip around the globe and a successful ship she was, and looked as able and comfortable as any sailing ship I had ever seen.

Gerry said, “How would you like to go around the world in this?”

“If I owned her,” I said, “I would rather sign on a crew of ten-bob-a-month Papuans and fish trochus shell out of the Coral Sea, and I’d never go to shore except twice a year in Sydney.”

We met the crew, who were as tanned as ourselves and looked the perfect picture of health. It was fun to compare experiences on the long transpacific passage and recall mutual acquaintances in the Islands. Below in the after-cabin, Irving Johnson and his wife gave us good information on what to see in Bali and what to buy in Singapore. We stayed aboard for supper.

The morning after next, with the strange names of a different world ringing in our ears, we slipped out of the pass with a five-knot tide and sailed out into that part of the Indian Ocean known as the Arafura Sea.

Overhead were high, white clouds, close packed and grained like morocco leather. The horizons were hazy, for the southeast monsoon was fresh; and a pale blue sea, rolling up out of the Gulf of Carpentaria to windward, was capped in white. The rigging was humming a high-pitched tune; and with a quartering breeze, the sails, distended in stiff, moulded curves, drove the ship steadily between seven and eight knots toward the Spice Islands of the East Indies.

Dolphins, thin, blunt-headed, flashed gold and green down the foam-flecked blue slopes in the wake of the ship. Flying fish, blue and silver, with transparent



wings, breaking water ahead, curved down wind and plunged into the back of the next sea. Sooty terns cried curiously at the weaving mastheads. It was noon, ten degrees south of the Line, but the freshness of the monsoon blew away the heat. During the last twenty-four hours, the *Hurricane* had made three degrees of westing across the Arafura Sea—one hundred and eighty nautical miles; and with life in the sea and the air, life aboard was at a very peak. Below, Hector, watching the kettle swing on the gimbal stove, was singing “La Cucaracha” at the top of his voice. Gerry was straddling the wheel, keeping the compass card between west and west by north, and feeling the ship with a practiced hand. On the horizon ahead, a dot grew rapidly into the shape of a ship, and a little Dutch steamer, dipping her white nose into the steep seas and laying a low line of windy smoke astern, passed close by; and we waved and shouted frantically. Then she was gone and life gravitated again within our ship. Hector came up to take the helm, balancing in one hand a pilot biscuit hidden beneath a red cone roof of strawberry jam; and Gerry and I went below for a lunch of flying fish: thirty of them had come aboard in the night and they were delicious, split in half and fried in deep fat, and we gorged ourselves on these air-minded mullet.

Hector’s excited yell, “*Capitan! Ballena!*” brought us quickly on deck; and, just aft, where the log line curved into the sea, were eight or nine black whales. Round-headed and sleek as seals, they plunged and rose in uniform curves like out-sized porpoises in slow motion. For half an hour they played close by, while our bloodthirsty hand, dancing with excitement, pleaded, “Capitan, why you no keel won zeas beeg bastard wiz zee rifley grande?” A definite *no* threw him into a black fit of depression until the tell-tale knot in the troll line zipped out and I took the wheel while he hauled in a fighting blue and silver torpedo, a ten-pound bonito, that pounded out its life on deck. Then, happy as a sailor in Sydney, he went below to boil the water for afternoon tea.

“Tomorrow,” said Gerry, happily, with a cup of tea in one hand and a pile of sweet biscuits in the other, “we’ll have land to watch, if the wind holds. We should pick up Sermata Island in the morning and Timor the next day.”

“Do you realize that we will coast along a continuous chain of islands for two thousand miles?”

“Yes, but I wish we had more time and money. It’s a shame to sail to the other side of the world just to pass up islands.”

“I know it, but one man’s life isn’t long enough to go everywhere.”

The wind had moderated slightly; we had sailed out from the ceiling of high white clouds and the seas were longer, showed fewer white tops. To the west, cumulus clouds, puffed up like mushrooms under the low sun, told of land or an area of calm.

“Four days out of Thursday Island, Coppy, and I add up the days’ runs to six hundred and seventy miles.”

“That’s a good average with dry decks and little work,” I said, and, stretching out on deck, I thought of the new world that would open up tomorrow when we would pass the first of the islands in the great archipelago that had drawn the shipping of Europe for five centuries.

Then suddenly I was cold. Shaking with a violent chill, I staggered below and, crawling into my bunk, sent Hector up to relieve Gerry, who came down alarmed and said:

“What’s the trouble, Coppy; have you got fever?”

“Those New Guinea mosquitoes have had time to incubate,” I answered through chattering teeth.

Gerry dived in the medicine locker for quinine, which I washed down with water. Then he administered gin and aspirin tablets and I stopped shaking, but I was hot and dry with fever. The cabin seemed unreal in the fading light, as the ship rolled out her seven-knot wake over an infinite ocean; and the fragrant, green Spice Islands and the fiery volcanoes to leeward were as remote and fantastic as a dream. Fever and chills and more fever, and when it subsided I melted into the bunk from perspiration, while Gerry and Hector stood watch through the long night. In the morning I was weak but well and hungry; and I knew that, with plenty of quinine aboard, the recurrent attacks would be less violent. The weather was as mild as Tahiti, and before noon a long green island was off to starboard.

That night, as we were watching a friendly lighthouse on Miarang reefs, one of the very few atolls in Netherlands India, I noticed, although the night was moonless, that the water gradually changed from the India ink, spark-flecked sea of off-soundings to the pale whitish colour of moonlight over a shoal, white

sand bottom. The line of the horizon disappeared in a pale reflected light. We sounded. There was no bottom at twenty fathoms. With a bearing on the lighthouse, we checked an accurate position well offshore in six hundred fathoms. The sounding lead and line failed to leave the usual trail of phosphorescent sparks, but it was clearly visible in the peculiarly lighted water. A school of porpoises, invisible off the beam but breathing audibly, rushed across the bow; and their markings, even the blow-hole in the tops of their heads, were as plainly discernible as if seen in broad daylight. The seams in the black hull stood out and the sails were ghostly white. It was lighter than a full moon night, yet there was no moon, and the light came not from above but from the water. Shadows were inverted.

“The devil,” I said, “has turned a spotlight on the keel.”

“Coppo!” cried Gerry. “You can read the compass without the binnacle light.”

“If this had happened last night, I wouldn’t have believed it.”

“Maybe we both have fever now.”

“Or we’re both crazy.”

“Hector! que es?”

But Hector shook his head and said, “*No y en Mexico.*”

Fascinated, we stared over the side and watched fish swim beneath the boat. The sea was like an aquarium equipped with underwater lights, and for several hours we ghosted along over the white sea. Gerry below, poring through volumes of “Sailing Directions,” finally shouted, “Eureka!” and, coming on deck, explained that this phenomenon had been seen before in the Red Sea, and it was caused by such an immense amount of phosphorescence in the water that, instead of the individual pale green sparks, they blended together into a mass of light.

“Well, I’m glad there is such a thing,” I said, relieved.

Then gradually the sea darkened until the eerie light was gone from the sky, like an encircling bank of fog melted by a sunrise. The black line of the horizon was definite and the stars were bright, and just ahead loomed a black mass of land, the island of Timor, the western boundary of the Arafura Sea.

## Chapter XXIV

**THE** wind had let us down and we wallowed under the lee of Portuguese Timor until after dark, when a land breeze, fragrant with the odour of flowers, came down from hills parched by the dry monsoon and sent us across the Wetta passage through the narrow Liran Straits, where the tide-rip piled breakers aboard, and into the Banda Sea. Now the Alor Islands, first of the lesser Sunda group, were to leeward, invisible in the night except for the bush fires, glowing red from the hills.

The nights were a blessing again, for the wind in the day was scarcely perceptible except off the passes between high islands where the monsoon came through fresh from the Indian Ocean. It was blistering hot, the hottest the ship had ever been at sea, with temperatures in the cabin above one hundred degrees. But at night there was always the fragrant land breeze that changed our longitude thirty or forty miles from sunset to sunrise, and then another day of temper-shortening heat. Every third or fourth day, in the late afternoon, an attack of malaria would have me shivering in a sun so hot that any exposed metal on the boat was impossible to touch, even by our rope-hardened hands.

The cockroaches were getting out of control again; the rice and flour were full of weevils; and the rats that had smuggled themselves aboard in New Guinea were playing havoc with our dry stores beneath the bunks, and even gnawed the callouses from the tough soles of Hector's feet, forcing him to sleep on deck.

"We need eggs," I said to Gerry one morning, after scraping a mess of Hector's soggy pancakes over the side, "and a few chickens."

"And some fresh fruit," added Gerry.

"There is a little town on the chart called Maumere," I said, looking at the glassy sea. "It's just around the point in the next bay."

We were becalmed off Flores Island. The town was scarcely thirty miles to the westward, yet it was not until the next morning that we saw the white houses through the palms that leaned out over the dark sand beach. Then a breeze came

out of the south and we had to spend the morning beating in. There was no jetty. A few unpainted *praus*, their decks protected by sun-bleached fibre mats hung over a ridgepole, were anchored a few feet from shore. The water was deep blue and I could see no shoal. Gerry, forward with the sounding lead, called back, "No bottom at fifteen." We crept in closer. There was no swell and little wind. I noticed the *praus* were moored to palms ashore. Gerry continued to call back, "No bottom," at each heave of the lead. Then when the bowsprit was almost on shore, Gerry called, "One fathom!" and dropped the anchor. We could have jumped ashore with dry feet, but when we had fetched up on the chain we found bottom aft at twenty-nine fathoms.

"Next time we come in here, I'll put her alongside the beach so we can step ashore without launchin' the dinghy."

Ashore, the streets were dry and dusty but curbed with concrete. It was a small village, and we followed the pointing fingers of the not very curious groups of Malays with the small features and straight jet black hair of India, wrapped in colourful sarongs, past native shops operated by Chinese in black pajamas, to a neat white house with a tiled roof where we were met by Mr. Lenhardt, the Dutch official (the only white or English speaking resident in Maumere), and his wife.

It was delightfully cool inside and we had a Dutch dipper bath, cold beer and, later, afternoon tea. Cooled and refreshed, the zest for life returned. The Lenhardts advised us to stop at Bima on the island of Soembawa, where plenty of fresh provisions were available, and, with a parting gift of two chickens and a dozen eggs, we started out for a two-day sail or a week's drift to the Sultanate of Bima.

Past the dry, red-brown mountains and the grey-green lowlands of Flores, we slowly made westing.

"And I always thought that the East Indies were as green as Maugham's *Emerald Necklace*," said Gerry, staring at the parched landscape.

"According to the pilots it rains only during the northwest monsoon. But Soembawa, Bali, Java, and Sumatra are always green."

With calms and light airs, we drifted across the Flores Sea under a cloudless sky without a single squall to bring the refreshing relief of wind and rain. We had not

seen rain since the last of July, and August was getting on. Between the rugged yellow and brown island of Komodo, of dragon lizard fame, and Soembawa, we finally caught a breeze that blew through the straits, accelerated as in a wind tunnel, raised a choppy white-crested sea, and sent us flying with the log-line and the troll line working furiously, trailing taut, straight aft. The wind, following the curve of the land, blew dust from the shore, whistled through the rigging and drew us through a narrow pass between Soembawa and an off-lying volcanic cone, six thousand feet out of the sea, that smoked from two tiny craters along its southern side. But when we rounded the corner and worked in toward the entrance of Bima Bay, the wind, disgusted with chasing the tiny craft, went offshore and left us once more weaving slightly over a glassy surface.

“We’ll never get into Bima under sail,” I said, and went below, turned on the fuel, and tickled the carburettor, while Hector grunted and sweated and swore on the crank, until the engine roared in defiance.

“That,” I told Gerry, dripping with perspiration, “will make the cabin nice and warm.”

“The hell with it,” said Gerry; “I craves fresh food.”

“And I hope Australian money is good in the town.”

At the head of the bay, the bottle-necked entrance to the harbour that nearly splits Soembawa in half opened up like a crooked river. We wound through the narrows and into the broad sheet of water of Bima Bay. The town reached along the eastern shore. A long jetty stepped across the mud flats past tide-stranded boats to green water, where an odd collection of crafts pointed the breeze. Small double-ended, high-sheered *praus*, painted in red, yellow, and green, were scattered among a fleet of the larger Makassar *praus* with square sterns built up high in tiers, and with low, rounded Dutch-nosed bows. Beyond the crooked-legged mangroves were tall palms; and back of the whitewashed warehouse at the foot of the jetty, a street opened up where there were scarlet flowers against the green. The land smelt of wood smoke and low tide mixed with a certain indefinable fragrance. Slowly and yet suddenly we had come to the East, where the most populous islands stretched below the largest continent, separated from the western world by barriers that are not altogether geographical.

Ashore we ran into difficulties. There were no white men in evidence and no one

spoke English. In Maumere we had learned one Malayan word, *blonda*, which means, literally, *Holland*, but designates white men in general. Lined up at the foot of the street were a number of little two-wheeled carts, elaborately decorated, drawn by diminutive horses, their harness hung with silver bells. We harangued and gesticulated in front of this taxi rank for some time and showed them Australian money, which they examined and rejected. Finally we climbed in a cart and, pointing ahead, shouted, "*Blonda*"; and the fez-topped driver, with the light of understanding in his eyes, whipped up his horse and we raced through the streets crowded with natives in bright sarongs, past innumerable Chinese shops and rows of thatched and frame native houses.

The driver sat forward, and Gerry and I in a small after compartment. We had not been underway long when we moved aft to gain more room for our legs. The driver shouted in alarm, for this sudden shift of ballast had raised the horse between the shafts up off the ground, where he desperately trod on air in an effort to regain traction. We unloaded, and the adjustable seat was pegged farther forward, and we were underway again in proper trim.

Beyond the town, the road wound up a hill to the European quarter, where the controller and various Dutch officials lived in well-built houses and neatly terraced lawns. It was a sudden contrast from Bima, this little Dutch town in the hills. The driver pulled up in front of a house and, pointing, said, "*Blonda*." We disembarked and found the *blonda* in pajamas, reclining in the cool interior of his plastered house; and our troubles were over. He spoke perfect English; and later, rather pointedly, explained that the Dutch took the trouble to learn English, among other languages, while he had yet to see an Englishman who attempted to speak anything but his native tongue. The taxi was paid one-fifth of a guilder (about ten cents) out of *blonda* Herr de Lange's pocket, and we settled ourselves down around a table, when a barefooted Malay appeared silently with glasses and sweating bottles of *Java Donker* beer. We talked about cruising and the islands and the Japanese menace. Then the controller arrived with a Dutchman by the name of Snyders in tow, and we exchanged tales of the Pacific for stories of Netherlands India. The flow of beer stopped and, in its stead, bottles of Holland gin and small glasses were produced and the party grew hilarious and confidential.

"You Americans," said the controller, "are all right; but the English—they are not human. In all my life I have only known one human Englishman—and why was that? Because he spent two months with six Dutchmen."

The loyal subjects of Queen Wilhelmina rocked with laughter. The controller continued, "This Englishman even became a great success at an old Dutch game. It was largely responsible for his humanizing. Come—we will play it now!"

The controller then placed five glasses in line a few inches apart along the edge of the table, filled each one to the brim, and then, drop by drop, added gin slowly until there was a crown of liquid on each glass. "Now," he said, "the object is to drink without spilling one drop. It takes a steady hand."

"That's easy," said Gerry, who leaned forward and gently, but noisily, sucked the crest of gin off the glass.

The Dutchman howled with laughter and shouted, "Pig!!"

"Gerry," I said, "I think that's one on the *Hurricane*."

"It is very simple," said the controller, demonstrating by conveying the glass up to his lips with a remarkably steady hand. "That is, for the first one—but as the evening grows old it becomes increasingly difficult. So, you see, this is how we humanized the Englishman. It is a famous game and very healthy. Nothing but the purest Geneva gin, undiluted by larvae-infested tank water. For an aperitif, it is absolutely unexcelled. Come, drink up, and we will try it again. Herr de Lange will feed you well later."

"Coppo," said Gerry aside, "we're in for a beating."

"It's going to be heavy weather with only a light lunch for ballast. I'm really awfully hungry," I said quietly to Gerry.

It was almost ten o'clock but still the game went on, with Holland pouring down their national beverage at the rate of two to one ahead of America. At last with scuppers under, we made the haven of the dining room and stared, slightly incredulous, at the immense amount of food. "*Rijsttafel*," announced our host, and conversation and friendship ceased with the earnest business of heaping twenty or thirty varieties of food on top of a huge mound of rice. Curried eggs and curried meats, fowl, giblets, vegetables, nuts, fish, soy sauce, hot sauce, and relishes were passed around by barefoot boys in bright sarongs. I felt like a steam shovel moving a mountain as I gradually worked in to the *rijsttafel*; but it was good and we were hungry. By midnight the project was finished and, with loosened belts, we relaxed and sipped strong extracted coffee



in hot sweet milk.

We left with exalted ideas of Dutch officialdom. Our host, motoring us back to salt water, agreed to meet us on the jetty in the morning and take us to market for our fresh provisions....

Bima was just an ordinary Oriental town and our visit a commonplace incident. The population, scarcely ten thousand, is under the rule of a sultan, complete with palace, who runs the show with plenty of Dutch strings tied to his uniform. It is no place, like Java and Bah, to fill coloured pages in a travel brochure. Large vessels cannot enter the harbour, and tourists seldom, if ever, go to Bima, and there is no reason why they should. But it was the first glimpse of the East and is etched in my memory as definitely as the bold silhouette of Ua Huka Island on the sunrise of our first South Sea Island landfall.

## Chapter XXV

**UNDER** a noon sun, the light and heat were intense; a few degrees north, the Equator bisected Borneo; fifty miles ahead, the mountains of Bali were hazy on the horizon; but to the south, close by, without the usual decorous cloak of clouds, the mighty peak of Lombok towered, naked, twelve thousand feet above the sea, carving a brown triangle in bold relief from the blue and white pattern of sky. . . . In a light, fair breeze, we slowly crept across a blue carpet that had been cut to fit the protruding backbones of a submerged continent. Astern was the grey-green slope of headless Tamboro, the dead volcano on Soembawa. Over a hundred years ago, three thousand feet of its cone-shaped head had been blown off in one of the most terrific volcanic eruptions reported in any part of the world. The island was devastated, thousands were killed outright and many more thousands died later of starvation, for the dust and pumice destroyed crops on the neighbouring islands of Lombok and Bali and parts of eastern Java. Now the remaining nine thousand feet of mountain terminates in a crater five miles across, and on its cool green slopes is a coffee plantation owned by a Swedish co-operative.

We visited there in the cool highlands two thousand feet above sea-level. The second blistering day at sea, on the advice of the controller in Bima, we had anchored off the steep black sand beach of Kanaga Bay. Under the coconut palms, a little village curved along the shore where there was a telephone connecting the estate with the sea. Gerry had called the manager, Herr Bjorklund, who came for us in a lorry, and we started on the twenty-kilometre ascent. The first mile or two wound through low trees and bush, and then the road tunnelled through the forests of the higher land: teak, dye-wood, and sapan. The estate is seventy thousand acres, but only two thousand are under cultivation. The volcanic soil, enriched by a hundred years of rain and sun and decayed vegetation, grows the finest Arabic coffee. There were monkeys and gaily-coloured birds and flowering vines; and, from the overseer's large house, a beautiful view of the sea and the islands. For two days we stayed, slept under blankets, ate excellent Swedish cooking, and swam in the large outdoor swimming pool. It was a jungle outpost with electric lights, radio, modern houses, motorcycles, trucks, horses and cows, fruit trees and vegetable gardens. A paradise carved in five years' time by our host who, with his wife, was as

delightful as the cool dry air.

I would have loved to remain a month, wandering over the plantation, just breathing the scented air and sleeping without waking in a bath of perspiration, or sipping aqua vitae and smoking Dutch cigars with Bjorklund after a dinner that could not have been bettered in any country estate in Sweden. But Singapore was many miles ahead, and although the monsoon was feeble, it was fair; in another month it would reverse and the change would be heralded with squalls and rain from the northeast. So we went to sea again, braced from the tonic of the hills, and full of optimism about the breeze that was coming in from the Flores Sea. . . .

Then we watched the line of sunlight slowly creep up Lombok's naked peak until the shadowed summit blended into the darkening sky. And in the morning there was Bali abeam, its mountains shrouded in morning mist, its coastline a brilliant green band above the line of yellow sand. A smudge of smoke from around the point was motionless against the blue windless sky. Close in, a fleet of *praus* lay becalmed, their white lateen sails flashing a semaphore in the sun as they rocked impatiently in the light swell from the Java Sea.

We had breakfast on eggs from Bima, while the *Hurricane* listlessly awaited the heat of the day. The smoke from around the point moved out to sea over a white ship and drew a dark line across the sky to the northward. Then the monsoon awoke and, encouraged by the rising hot air over the land, rushed in from the northeast; and, in an hour, we rounded up in Boeleling roadstead, the entrance port, and anchored in six fathoms off the mouth of a fresh-water stream that had eaten away the fringing coral reef. The officials, in clean white uniforms, came off in a neat white launch, and I showed our bill of health and entered the ship.

At the moment there was no cruise ship in Bali, but a load of Australians was expected tomorrow. In this brief respite, we had the town of Boeleling to ourselves. Under the guidance of an English-speaking Chinese, by the name of Tan Boon Inn, we entered a dark and smelly restaurant, run by his countrymen, where we thoroughly enjoyed Chinese food and dark Dutch beer, while our self-appointed guide stood by with a solicitous eye, watching us wash down a respectable cargo of food.

“Tan Boon Inn,” I said slowly, relishing the name, “you are wasting your time because we have very little money.”

“Oh yes, sir, Captain,” he said, “tomorrow I will arrange a car from a friend and we will drive across the island to Den Pasar. We will see the forest of sacred monkeys, then we will stop at the temples----”

“But,” I repeated emphatically, “we have no money.”

“Oh yes, sir. Tonight I will take you to see some Balinese girls. They are very beautiful---”

“Damn it! I said we were broke!”

“Oh yes, sir, I understand. We will not go to the K.P.M. hotels but to Chinese hotels where it is very inexpensive. In Den Pasar we will buy wood carvings and silver work; they are very beautiful; and everyone goes to the temples and the forest of sacred monkeys.”

“Corry, this guy is hard to shake,” said Gerry.

Tan Boon Inn persisted, “In the country, the women walk about only in *sarongs*; they are very beautiful.” And, with his hands, he described two large mounds on his flat chest. Gerry burst out laughing at this salesmanship on Balinese breasts.

Inn started on another track. “We will drive up in the mountains to a lake and see the old volcano, and then we will stop in Den Pasar----”

“All right,” I interrupted. “How much will a car cost for two days?”

We made a deal for so much less than the current advertised rate that we could not turn it down. In the K.P.M. (Royal Packet Navigation Company) office we exchanged Australian pounds for guilders. We counted costs again—there just was not enough money, even at Inn’s bargain rates, to drive across the island and back (three hundred kilometres).

“We’ll go,” I said to Gerry.

“How?” he asked.

“We should have money in Batavia by this time, and I’ll wire the American consul to have it transferred to the K.P.M. office here.”

“*If* the money’s there and *if* he’ll transfer it----”

“Well, there’s no sense in warping a boat 15,000 miles just to spend a day or two sitting in a dirty hot seaport town. In the meantime, we have enough for current expenses, and we’ll put our Chinese friend and the car on the cuff.”

I sent the wire and made a deal to meet Inn on the jetty at nine the next morning.

Bali was like an animated page out of the geography. It was almost too good to be true; and, even in its darker corners, we failed to discover the degree of squalor that is so prevalent in most eastern towns. The people were sturdy and straight, and many faces and physiques reminded me of Tahiti. I think a cross between a Chinese and a Polynesian would pass as a native Balinese. And yet there was a difference—a great difference. The districts of Boeleling, with their innumerable Chinese shops, might have been a section of Papeete except for the predominant deeper colours of the East.

It was not until we had crossed the mountains over a road that writhed uphill, and started on the long gradual slope tilted towards the Indian Ocean, that I realized we were in an entirely different world. The South Sea Islanders accept the breadfruit as a gift from heaven; but the Balinese work with heaven and produce their food upon this great fertile plain. Terrace after terrace of rice paddies met the eye; young green rice planted in contours, and in each field a little peak-roofed temple held offerings to the gods of fecundity; and, brown against the green, or dark against a line of sky, the Balinese farmers, in large round cone hats, followed wooden ploughs pulled by water buffaloes with flat curved horns and lowered heads. This Mississippi Valley of Bali supported 1,500,000 Balinese who, relieved from the daily quest for food, evolved a high degree of civilization; and the product of their leisure hours was the soul-profiting industry of art.

Down the road to Den Pasar, the inland market-place of Bali, we passed through village after village and temple after temple. Straight-backed Balinese women in rich brown printed sarongs, carrying baskets of produce on their heads; men with balanced baskets on a long pole over a shoulder; children, dogs, fowl and pigs, fighting cocks in cages of rattan; open markets with old women and occasional

black-pajama-clad Chinese, squatting among pyramids of deeply-coloured fruit, flashed by as our Balinese driver scattered the domestic animals with a raucous horn. In each village, craftsmen were at work creating beauty in carvings of wood, filigrees of silver, engraving, weaving tapestries with gold and silver thread, weaving beautifully designed cloth on home-made looms, and chiselling images in soft stone.

In this ancient civilization, there are no ruins to prove a greater day because their temples of intricate but balanced design are kept alive. The carvings of stone look very old and weathered, belonging to the soil and the landscape. But the site of the temples is all that is old, for the soft stones erode in the heavy rain and their life is scarcely ten years. Then a new block is carved and so this lack of permanency keeps their art alive with their religion, both of which should continue to live as long as the Dutch prohibit the missionaries from forcing their views on the Balinese. But some day it will come, and the women will go about in Mother Hubbards, and art will die with the worship of beauty, and the crops will be divided again: so much for the Dutch government, so much for the Balinese, and so much for religion. The influence of the tourists, although there are many thousands each year, has done little beyond making the seaports money-conscious, building a few hotels and rest houses, and improving the island roads.

In Den Pasar, which was just another assortment of Chinese shops, we drove by the attractive K.P.M. twelve-guilder-a-day hotel and pulled up in front of a frame building called The Oriental. It was a Chinese hotel and it was not very clean, but the rooms were a guilder and a half, which included breakfast, tea, and supper. There was a cement bath, equipped with a Shanghai jar and a dipper; the toilet was a ledge of concrete, running athwartship, alongside of which were three beer bottles full of water. The partitions in my room were made of boxwood, bearing the legend: "Palm Tree Brand Matches, made in Sweden." There were cockroaches waving their whiskers between the cracks in dark corners, but not so many as there were on the *Hurricane*. But the beds were good and the sheets clean. The food was fair but the portions so inadequate that we demanded seconds, and even thirds, and one-half guilder each was tacked on the bill.

In two days we were back in the hot seaport of Boeleling (and I had Bali fairly well photographed) with approximately the same amount of knowledge of the Balinese as any other two-day tourist, but with a desire to stay six months on the

slopes of South Bali and watch the puffy white clouds from the Indian Ocean sail across the blue. I have heard few over-statements about Bali, and even the flagrant tourist brochures scarcely do the island justice.

Luckily, we had money from Batavia and I paid off the irresistible Tan Boon Inn, whose parting remarks were that he was very sad that we had not seen the forest of the sacred monkeys or taken aboard the boat the very beautiful girls whose price was only a guilder.

“We will come back,” we shouted. And, hoisting the dinghy aboard, we went to sea with the novelty of a fresh breeze, Surabaya-bound, into the maze of East Indian traffic.

Madura *praus* plied east and west with their single lateen sails full of wind. Makassar *praus* crisscrossed our bows with their light topsails set over the boomless sprit-rigged sails. Fishing-boats with curved high stems and sterns darted about like gulls, or lay inert with their folded wings serving as an awning to shade the fishermen from the intense heat. Black freighters left lines of smoke along the course. The mountains of Java, blue with distance, were off to port. Then it was dark and the shipping, interesting and friendly by day, was a menace by night. It was an eye-strain plotting the probable course of the many dim yellow lanterns bobbing around the ship. Before daylight we were becalmed, and a steamer passed so close across our bow that we rocked violently in the wake. She was light and we could hear her big propeller thrashing the water, and the throb of her engines, as the black mass moved through the still night. Then, with the security of daylight, the hot sun melted the clouds over Java, and Madura was a thin black line to starboard. At the head of Madura Straits was the entrance to Surabaya harbour. The water changed from blue to green, and from green to mud, as we waved to a black lightship anchored off the long crooked line of channel buoys. But the wind was light and, with the outgoing tide rippling around the markers, we made slow progress and it was dark again before we reached the anchorage. There were a million lights from the city of Surabaya. We passed a small steamer, port to port, and then a tug crept up astern and snorted in disgust until the feeble breeze, smelling of Java’s lowlands, nudged us over to the far side of the channel.

We had no detailed chart of Surabaya’s inner harbour, so we felt our way in past lights and ships and wharfs until the life of the town was all about us, and dropped the anchor, with a silent prayer that we were not in the middle of a

shipping lane. We went to sleep on the cool deck-house, with the sound and smell of Java's second city borne off in the land breeze, wondering what the dawn would unfold; for a strange harbour at night is cloaked in mystery and is without scale or bearings, except for the blinking channel lights, and often a liner alongside a jetty will look larger than the city itself; a dark mass may be a hill, a distant mountain or a rock pile close by. The sounds past midnight are unidentifiable; the subdued throb of a city blends with the metallic sound of the shipping; but there is a thrill in the smell of the land, not heated by a sterile sun, the moist green, the night earth, the warehouses of copra, molasses, cotton, and freshly sawn timber; the cordage, tar, oil, and damp rusty metal of ships; and, filtering through, is the faint, mysterious smell of the East: spice, joss-sticks, dirty clothes, and sewage.

When entering a port by day, you watch it grow out of the sea; and, before the anchor is on the bottom, you are already familiar with the town, its streets and warehouses, the customs and the post office; but, at night, only the lights streak silently down in the oily water, and in the morning you are suddenly there.

At sunrise we awoke and blinked our eyes at a fleet of small boats and the large black letters, S. Y. C., on a long, white shed.

"Cappy," said Gerry, "you couldn't have done better in daylight—we're right off the yacht club jetty."

"Yes, but nowhere near the quarantine anchorage. . . . I think we better go ashore and call the customs and the port doctor," I said, without enthusiasm, for the first day in port meant the monotonous rounds of the port authorities and the ship chandlers. There would not even be the thrill of mail at the consulate because all our mail was in Batavia. I hated the prospect of wandering around in a coat and tie on the hot, white streets.

We had breakfast, and beads of perspiration oozed out on our foreheads, and our shirts were soaked through by the time Hector had set us ashore in the dinghy. At the Surabaya Yacht Club, we raised the caretaker, a Dutchman by the name of "Pete," who spoke not one word of English. We stumbled around and finally hit on the word, *taxi*; then I showed Pete the ship's clearance from Bali, which was printed in Dutch, and hoped that some way he would steer us to the customs. A few minutes after Pete had dialed a number on the phone, a taxi with a red-fezzed Javanese skipper drove up, and Jerry and I climbed in and, to our



surprise, Pete followed and gave directions in Malay to the driver.

“This,” I thought, “will save us time and trouble.”

We were not properly oriented, but I did realize that we were not headed for the waterfront; the taxi was steering inland and we were soon in the heart of Surabaya’s business district, where we pulled up in front of the Orange Hotel. Pete bought all hands a drink, and we smiled and nodded our appreciation of this hospitable gesture. Then with the ship’s papers in hand, we started again, this time headed for the waterfront down Surabaya’s busy modern street. We had been underway only a few minutes when the cab halted in front of a less pretentious pub, where we retaliated by buying Pete a drink. The morning was getting on and I was anxious to have our calls out of the way before the heat of midday when, with a conscience cleared by the work behind, we might enjoy sitting in a shady pub, sipping cool, dark Dutch beer. We gesticulated considerably with Pete, waving the ship’s papers and shouting, “customs,” which had the result of getting us underway. But just when we were expecting to reach our destination, with the sigh of relief all set for heaving, we were side-tracked in front of another pub—this one a real waterfront dive. Pete, unsteadily but stubbornly, following this tack of hospitality, ushered us inside where he ran face to face upon an “old enemy.” And, after a short but heated exchange of words, a fight ensued; Pete and his nemesis rolled over and over on the floor in a tight embrace, knocking over chairs and tables and exchanging a few ineffective blows. It was odd watching a fight in the Dutch language. Suddenly two of the largest policemen I have ever seen came in and, with amused smiles, restored order and departed. A short, heavy-set man standing at the bar came over to our table and addressed us in English. We told him our troubles and he agreed to steer us around Surabaya. His first act was to send Pete, who was now unable to navigate, back to the S. Y. C.

With an interpreter, it was plain, fair wind sailing. We completed our rounds, bought fresh supplies, and were heading for the *Hurricane* to shed our clothes and relax, when our friend said, “You must come and see my place.”

“And where is that?”

“I am the proprietor of the best cafe in Surabaya,” he said proudly. “At night there is music and dancing. My bartender even understands American drinks. It is the best cafe in Surabaya, even if I do say it myself. I will pay for everything

and the dinner.”

“Fancy *carte blanche* at a night club,” Gerry whispered to me.

The establishment was fairly elaborate, but almost deserted in the hot late afternoon. We had a beer and a sandwich, and wandered slowly around town until dark, when we returned for dinner and found the cafe going full blast. Our friend had reserved us a table near the orchestra. We were hungry.

“This,” I said, scanning the menu, “is going to cost our friend a lot o’ money.”

“I should have warned him about you,” Gerry said.

The food was good and we had red wine and white wine, and we ate for an hour; then lingered over strong black coffee and Martell’s brandy until our hearing was dulled by the loud music and the babble of voices. We were ready to go to bed, but our new host was as intent as Pete in keeping us away from the ship, and it was not until midnight that we were unloaded under the welcome S. Y. C. sign. We shouted for Hector. He appeared, sleepy-eyed, and, with the contemptuous smile of the virtuous, sculled the happy after guard across the still waters of the inner harbour.

## Chapter XXVI

**IT WAS** after three o'clock in the morning when the anchor was let go and the chain, looped on deck, writhed out through the hawse pipe like a snake. The moon was dull yellow in the west and beyond the myriad harbour lights, the red glow of Batavia, capital of Netherlands India, was reflected in the sky. It was flat calm; the wind had dropped us only a few miles from the breakwaters of Tanjong Priok, and we were sleepy. Since dark we had been beating in, using each puff of the uncertain land breeze to make southing, dodging the shipping and the reef-fringed islands that littered the bay.

Gerry, rolling himself up in a sheet on the deck-house, muttered something about "mail from home tomorrow" and, with his nose pointing the pale sky, snored off into slumber. Stretched out on the opposite side of the deck, I watched Hector lash the anchor light on the forestay, and when I closed my eyes the spot of light did not fade but multiplied into many yellow and red dots that flashed or revolved. Then they gradually dimmed into the darkness of sleep, which was shattered by a hand on my shoulder and Hector's excited cry, "Capitan!"

I jumped up. The breeze was fresher and I heard the lapping of little waves against the bow. A yellow eye and a black shape pushing up a white ribbon of water appeared out of the blackness, bearing down on the *Hurricane* with dark wings before the land breeze. I awoke Gerry and we yelled at the top of our lungs. The ship was close and I heard the hiss of the bow wave and I saw the head and shoulders of the helmsman, highlighted by a lantern suspended aft, straining on the huge tiller. The strange ship bore off a point, her long high bowsprit barely clearing the main shrouds, and her bulging side amidship passed by within a yard of us. The red glow of an open fire lighted the faces of the crouching Malay crew and I heard the tinkle of a stringed instrument in a high monotonous key. Then she was gone, leaving momentarily a trail of sparks in her wake. Unreal as a dream this fantasy of the East had flashed, for a minute, out of the night.

Gerry, muttering something about "no rest for the weary," went to sleep again, vibrating under forced draft; and I watched Hector forward hang the spare lantern on the forestay. The other light had burnt out. There was a pale line under

a bank of clouds to the eastward, and I knew there would be no sleep for the weary or the wicked, for the excitement of a strange port had stolen aboard from the ghostly sail that had passed so closely in the night. I went below and lit the Primus stove; and when the sun looked over Java, the smell of Tombara coffee floating out of the companionway alleviated the rude cry of: "Get up, you lazy sinners!"

With all sail set we lay inert, waiting for the sea breeze to blow us into the harbour, while we shaved, bathed in the cockpit, and scrubbed the decks—the same old routine. After breakfast the wind came in fresh and we sailed in between the breakwaters of Tanjong Priok, past rows of ships moored to buoys. A hospitable Hollander from the Yacht Club jumped aboard from a launch and steered us to a convenient anchorage, where, off our stern was a friendly, familiar sign: "General Motors Company." Gerry thought it would be fun to associate with gringos again and I agreed with him, but our list of repairs for the ship was growing longer each day. We needed a new mainsail, new blocks, and a complete overhaul of the standing and running rigging. For thirty-five days we had drifted west through the Indies and now we would turn the corner and steer north along Sumatra's coast for Singapore just across the Equator.

Ashore we approached the Yacht Club cautiously, fearful lest we fall into the hands of another "Pete," and our plan to evacuate Batavia in one day would explode. But we found the place in charge of a capable steward who served us lunch and delivered us a letter. It was from Messrs. Gagen and Freeman of the Australian yacht *Kewarra*, whom we had raced from Brisbane to Sydney just a year ago. Last week they had been in Batavia and were now anchored at Singapore. We cheered the news and hastened uptown to make the usual rounds of the consul, the customs, and the Chandler; and the next day we sailed.

It was the first time in *Hurricane's* history that we had entered and cleared a city in a single day, which we regretted at once because the first twenty-four hours at sea we made only thirty-five miles, and the next day only thirty-nine. The heat was tiring. At night clouds rolled out from Sumatra but brought little wind and no rain. The drier heat of the Indies changed as we slowly wallowed northward to the humid oppressive heat of the doldrums, and blacker and heavier were the clouds over Sumatra. Four days, and the cool yacht club veranda at Batavia was only one hundred miles astern. Then a light easterly took us up to Banka Straits, a winding salt river between the lowlands of Sumatra and the island of Banka. The sky in the day was partly cloudy, and at night there was always thunder and

lightning to the westward. The weather changed again and from calms to cat's-paws we lived on calms and squalls without rain, but they smelled of rain and cooled the air. The first day from the narrows of Banka Straits we lay becalmed, helpless, and watched four waterspouts funnel down from black nimbus clouds: three were distant but one passed less than a quarter of a mile astern. We had taken off all the canvas and we wondered what would happen if that whirling black hollow tube, playing over the ocean and drilling up the water into a crown of spray, should pass over the ship. It would be fatal in an open boat, but I think with bare poles the heavily built *Hurricane* would have taken only a soaking from a few tons of water dumped on deck. It was not a very large waterspout, but it made considerable fuss in the sea and sounded like a cascade as it roared across our wake.

At night the land breeze from the west was becoming more regular and we made considerable northing up through Berhala Strait, but always under the threat of great black banks of clouds that brought off enough wind to straighten the slack sheets for a half-hour or an hour and then left us coasting along in a zephyr. The night before we entered Durian Straits, the south-west channel to Singapore roads, we had several false alarms from these black, almost windless, squalls and I no longer called all hands to stand by to shorten sail. Since three o'clock I had been on watch, and when the eastern sky was pale with faint silhouetting innumerable islands on the horizon, another black line of clouds came up rapidly from the south-west, appearing no different than the others and yet it looked blacker, perhaps in contrast to the dawn, but it was coming up faster. We were making about two knots in a quartering breeze and the sheets were slack. I looked up at the ship's clock—it was almost six—in a few minutes I would call all hands. I was hungry for breakfast. We were only thirty miles from Singapore and the end of a long, hot passage. I counted the days since our last rain, which was in the Gulf of Papua, and realized that there had not been a drop of rain on the *Hurricane's* decks for *fifty-two days!* The cloud bank was approaching the zenith, a hard puff of wind filled the sails and the ship came to life. I looked aloft and saw ragged detached clouds racing overhead, then I heard the whine of wind. The water to windward was white under the solid black cloud curtain. "On deck!" I yelled. And, as Gerry and Hector came sleepy-eyed out of the companionway, the squall burst with all its fury.

The lee scuppers were under solid water. I dared not run because of the rocky islands to leeward. Luffing the main as gently as possible in sixty miles of wind, I prayed we could get her off in time; but, just as Gerry loosened the halyard, the

sail, spotty with mildew and weathered by two and a half years of hard work, gave up with considerable noise and struggle. In fact, she blew right out of the bolt ropes and we clawed in the whipping mass of torn canvas. Rain and spray blew across the decks. The dawn had retreated into darkness as the squall blacked out the eastern horizon. In two hours it was all over and the soggy main festooned the boom. It was very sad. The faithful old sail had only thirty more miles to work and then it would have been given a decent burial under the after-bunk. Then we bent the old marconi mizzen on the main and proceeded slowly up the straits for Singapore as an under-rigged schooner, until the heat poured down again on another windless day. At least we had the salt out of our hair and the atmosphere had definitely cleared. There was a little gasoline left in the tanks; we started the engine and chugged along past islands and islands, reefs, lights, buoys, and ships toward the busiest port in the East and the eighth largest port in the world.

At sunset the smoke from the invisible city was a thin dark cloud above the jungle-clad islands. The reflection of the red doldrum sky in the water was vibrated by the fast ebbing tide. Chinese junks hung motionless in the straits, their tan-barked sails in variegated shades of brown and red, distended by their multiple-booms like the wings of a bat, lay lifeless against the masts. We slid past a huge timber barge from Borneo; the end of her long bowsprit was higher than the *Hurricane's* mizzenmast and her great loose-footed sails hung from sprits aloft on masts that were jungle trees, in soft wrinkles like curtains of deep maroon velvet.

Just at dark we rounded the last point of land. The city of Singapore and the crowded roadstead lay before us, a blaze of lights and neon signs. The engine coughed and died, we were out of fuel, but there was a little southerly breeze and we had enough steerage-way to dodge the shipping. We were grateful for the peace and quiet.

“We’re really coming in on our last rope end,” said Gerry.

“It’s cutting it pretty fine,” I laughed; “but we’re less than four miles from town.”

The wind increased until we were making a good three knots and we picked out the flashing red light on the end of the breakwater protecting the inner harbour.

“Gerry, you stay forward as lookout; and, Hector! stand by the main sheet. I’ll watch the mizzen.”

There were junks and sampans and barges and *praus* plying back and forth, unlighted except for a dull yellow lantern, and their red sails were black against the night sky. Steamers were leaving and entering, and their red and green eyes looked at us threateningly. Inside the breakwater, the tide took charge of the ship.

I shouted forward, “Stand by the anchor and let her go as soon as we get in the clear.”

The deep vibrant note of a whistle sounded at the back of my neck, and, turning, I saw the blunt bow of a freighter pushing up the water only a few feet astern.

“Watch a jibe!” I yelled and put the helm hard over. The steamer passed, inches off to port.

Gerry cried, “Hard a port!” and I jibed back just in time to miss another steamer sneaking along close to the breakwater.

“If we get in here it will be a miracle,” I said.

Then Gerry shouted back, “I see a yacht anchored inshore between these next two ships!”

There was not much space between the stern of one ship and the bow of the next; but a heaven-sent puff of wind gave us a little more steerage-way, and I rounded the stern of the steamer so close that a man aloft could have passed his hand over the white letters of her name. Before the tide could sweep us sideways on to the other ship, we rounded up well in the clear and anchored just off the stern of a new white schooner yacht, the *So Fong*. She was an American yacht built in Hong Kong and bound for New York. We had heard about her from the customs at Bali and Batavia. After supper, we rowed aboard the *So Fong*, met her owner and his two sons, exchanged gossip of the East Indies, and learned that our friends on the *Kewarra* were at the yacht club anchorage, and that our friends on the *Director* had gone to China after selling their boat.

Singapore was noisy at night from the traffic ashore and the shipping in the harbour. I tried sleeping on the deck-house until the rain drove me below, where I dreamt that great ships with blazing red, green, and yellow eyes were

converging on the *Hurricane* from all points of the compass; but the *Hurricane* escaped by gradually sinking below the dark water and emerging again when the angry snorting steamers had passed.

In the morning the harbour was quiet and misty, but by nine o'clock it was hot, and confusion reigned aboard the ship. Hindu fortune tellers, bearded and turbaned; Chinese ship-chandlers in white ducks; agents; tailors who would make you a suit in one day; Chinese sew-sew women in black who would mend any torn clothing aboard; and sampan boys who wanted to carry us ashore—all clamoured for attention. It was *Tuan* this, and Captain that, until I had such an attack of claustrophobia that I jumped in a sampan and went ashore to enter the customs and send a distress signal to the *Kewarra*, while Gerry stood by to repel boarders.

After perspiring through the customs in the record time of five minutes, I rickshawed back to the landing and met Jim Gagen, immaculate, cool, and fresh. Burdened with the longest list of repairs and supplies in our history, I said, "Jim, I've got troubles laid on."

"Come," he said, "we'll have a gin and tonic."

"Let's go where it's cool."

Jim suggested the swimming club and I called out to Gerry to lock up and come ashore. Hector was off on his regular "first day in port holiday" which, regardless of the amount of money in his pocket, always resulted in a two-day drunk and a third day sobering up aboard when, with his eyes sagging down over his cheeks, we usually worked him unmercifully in the hot sun scrubbing topsides.

The swimming club was cool, that is, for Singapore at high noon. A breeze blew in from the Straits and on the large upstairs veranda we lunched and discussed our plans. Jim several years ago had spent eight years managing the Oriental Telephone and Electric Company, and he spoke Malayan as a Malay. He advised that we move in to the Royal Singapore Yacht Club harbour and anchor alongside the *Kewarra*; all the work on the ship could be contracted for on the spot, the anchorage was away from the shipping and the club only twenty minutes from town, and taxis were plentiful and cheap.

"We'll move tomorrow," I said, "and the next thing I want is a cook, a Chinese



cook.”

“I’ll see the ‘mandore’ of the yacht club and have one sent off tomorrow. If he is satisfactory, we could divide his expense between the two yachts and have a combined mess.”

We agreed, and I looked forward to a vacation from Hector’s unappetizing concoctions and a relief from our own responsibility in the galley.

The next day the schooner *Yankee* came in and anchored near the *So Fong*, and the American flags drooped over the counters of three yachts close together in Singapore’s inner harbour; but the *Hurricane* was the only one with a draft shoal enough to anchor at the yacht club. Jim Gagen came off on schedule with a very small, pock-marked Chinese in a white coat buttoned up to his chin.

“This is Ah Ming,” he said simply. “He comes well recommended but he doesn’t understand a word of English.”

“Well, that just places the responsibility of the combined mess on you, Jim,” I said.

Hector came aboard a day ahead of time with two Indians in tow; he was very sick and collapsed on the deck-house in a new suit of shore clothes. The two Indians looked sad but expectant; they were his creditors for the new suit and wanted ten dollars, Straits money. I settled for five, and they left after a futile attempt to raise the sampan fare from the semi-conscious Hector.

I poured a five-gallon tin of gasoline in the tank while Gerry and Jim showed Ah Ming over the galley, and we moved up over the anchor. Ah Ming fixed lunch as we threaded our way out through the shipping and around a line of sunken hulks that formed the yacht club harbour, where we anchored a boat length from the *Kewarra* and warped our stern into the old hulks. I sent Hector to the hospital and we settled down comfortably and quietly aboard to draw plans for reconditioning of the *Hurricane*; but little did we know that we had placed ourselves under the rule of a tyrant.

Ah Ming brought aboard, along with his knowledge of cooking for Tuans, gleaned from many years’ experience, a whole bag of tricks; and the *Hurricane’s* galley was soon crowded with jelly moulds of various shapes, pie tins, mysterious condiments, bamboo straws, and even feathers for tickling a roast

with sauces. Cakes, pies, and puddings began to follow soup, fish, and meat, and meals aboard the ship became such an event that we felt sorry for the people ashore. Ah Ming boasted that he could cook anything, and he could; he also boasted that he could make a different kind of pudding twice a day for a month, and he did! But he ruled the galley with an iron hand, allowing no man to interfere with his art except a sloe-eyed Malay boy who ferried him back and forth in a sampan and whom he allowed to wash the dishes in return for food and a contract to keep the tanks full of water. It was a pleasant life under the Ming dynasty, even with our loss of freedom below and an expense that exceeded our expectation. Jim Gagen kept the accounts, and once I asked him if Ah Ming was honest, and Jim said, "Definitely. ... He will not cheat you as much as you would be cheated yourself if you went to market. Naturally, he collects his *cumshaw*. You see here in his book he has twenty cents a day for rickshaw hire, but he rides a bicycle."

We paid Ah Ming twenty-five dollars, Straits, a month, and when he hit us for a rise of five dollars we paid it promptly in the face of his threat to leave. Like many artisans, he was somewhat of an exhibitionist, and loved company for dinner and the subsequent compliments on his cooking; but he was also jealous, and when we were invited out to dine he would ask on our return where we had been; and, so close was the houseboy's fraternity, that he would tell us what we had eaten, whether, in his estimation, it was good or bad, sumptuous or meager.

Our plans for remodelling were completed and we turned the deck over to another even smaller Chinese by the name of Ah Gin, who was addicted to the pipe and was usually in the clouds of *chandu* (opium); but he was as fine a carpenter as Ah Ming was a cook, and the ship blossomed forth with new overlaid, sprung in, teakwood decks; a new teak skylight; hatches; combings; cleats, and bits. A ship-chandler, a countryman of the Ah's, made us a new mainsail and main topsail and a large reaching jib, and tan-barked the old sails as well as the new, which was done to prevent mildew. We were completely in the hands of the Chinese, as well as a crew of the Malay boys from the yacht club who scraped the black paint from the hull, which, according to Hector, meant the end of all "mala fortuna" and the commencement of fair winds and fine weather.

The *Yankee* sailed for Cape Town and the *So Fong* for Aden, but the *Hurricane* lingered on, stretching her new red sails in the sun over her new rich brown teak

decks. Krebs's "sketch" rigged fishing smack was slowly transformed into a finished yacht.

But, even with Ah Ming below and Ah Gin above, there was plenty of work to do, and we welcomed the hour when the sun was over the yardarm and we went ashore to a shower and *stingahs* or *pahits* on the R.S.Y.C. wide veranda, where we sat quietly until the cool darkness dropped. Sometimes we went to town in the evening when it was not too hot to walk, and strolled leisurely up through the narrow side streets past the innumerable shops, under banners printed with Chinese characters. There are over half a million Chinese in Singapore and the density of the population is amazing. Once we went to Ah Gin's warren. He greeted us demonstratively, and we sat around on boxes while his boy went for beer. The family lived upstairs over the carpenter shop, which was in back of a fruit and vegetable stand. There was a faint smell of joss-sticks, but the place smelled strongly of urine. Ah Gin brought out his pipe, loaded it with a tiny globe of *chandu*, lit it and inhaled deeply, making a face like an orangutan; then he showed me the blocks he was making for the *Hurricane*—they were beautifully fashioned out of wood as hard as iron and fitted with solid brass sheaves. We left Ah Gin seated on a high box, clasping his knees, with his long slim pipe in his wrinkled leathery face, content with a day's work done and enough profit to buy his thirty-five cent pellet at the British government Opium Store.

Often we went to the Chinese-owned amusement parks, western civilization's most conspicuous contribution to eastern culture. They are huge affairs and the upper strata of Singapore's Chinese wander through the midway in European clothes, carefully avoiding the Hindu fakirs with their baskets of cobras and bags of tricks, which usually have their circle of Tuans and tourists. There are always one or more open-air Chinese plays enacted, and the noise and din is terrific. The orchestra and stagehands in ordinary work clothes stand nonchalantly around the stage, the centre of which is the scene of most violent action; a bearded judge sits on a dais, a beautiful maiden pleads in high-pitched scream for either life or death, and a powerfully-built hero or villain, naked from the waist up, runs around in circles howling like a madman and swinging a great sword in a wide arch, cutting swaths out of the smoky, noisy atmosphere. But the main attraction is the cabaret, where you can sit around the roped-off dance floor at tables with the Tuans and affluent Chinese, order drinks and dance with the hired taxi-dancers to the tune of American swing music and a twenty-five cent ticket. The girls are mostly Eurasians, with a scattering of pure Chinese; well-groomed

and perfumed, sheathed in tightly-fitted coloured satin or silk, they are very slender and some are quite beautiful, with soft creamy skin and jet-black eyes and hair.

Under the guise of gleaning facts for fiction, we hunted iniquity in the wicked city of Singapore and found it sadly wanting. The best amusement was to tickle the bare feet of the watchmen who slept on wooden benches in front of the larger shops; they were usually giant, bearded Sikhs, and the reward of this childish pastime was a roar of anger or shrieks of alarm that echoed through the streets. After dark the town is quiet, and at midnight it is dead; the opium dens are no more than havens for weary rickshaw coolies who, for a few cents, eat a bowl of rice and smoke a pipe to forget their tired feet. There is practically no crime and very little sin in Singapore; in fact, there is a great deal less of both than in most towns in the United States. The many races live at peace with one another and prosper under the British policing. The Chinese and Japanese operate shops side by side; even though the dawn comes up with the thunder of cannons out of China, there were no anti-Japanese demonstrations in Singapore.

October had come and gone and the pilot book promised that in November the northeast monsoon in the China Sea would follow the sun's declination south and blow through the Straits, when a tragedy broke up the combined *Hurricane-Kewarra* mess. Queenslander Roy Freeman, Jim's partner, went to the hospital with a terrific pain in his chest. An X-ray showed advanced tuberculosis. Roy was only forty-five and he would be an invalid for the rest of his life. It was a serious blow to all of us, particularly to Jim, for the bonds of a partnership in a small boat are strong. We saw Roy off on a ship for Australia; and Jim, left alone on the yacht, was a changed man, his lively banter and his innumerable stories were silenced by the empty place at our mess. Early in November, with a hired Malay crew and two friends from the R.S.Y.C., Jim and the *Kewarra* sailed homeward, bound for Brisbane, and we were left to the mercies of Ah Ming; but we had learned enough Malayan to get along fairly well and the work on the ship rapidly neared completion.

Hector mutinied on the fifteenth and ran away, but the coconut wireless is just as effective in Singapore as in the South Seas, and he was rounded up by the threat of the harbour police. And on the sixteenth of November we sailed in harmony with a new ship but without the promised wind. We were headed for

Port Dickson in the Strait of Malacca, where we were going inland to visit on a rubber estate. We had received a letter some weeks before sailing from a V. W. Ryves at the Linsum Estate, Rantau, Negri Sembilan, F.M.S., asking us to visit him. He said he would put us up and show us a bit of the country. He had read about the *Hurricane* in the Singapore paper and he expressed a desire to do what he could for two wandering marines. It sounded interesting. He was known in Singapore as a “good chap,” but also as the man who kept tigers!

## Chapter XXVII

**THE** new reaching jib, twenty feet along the foot, and light as a feather, was a thing of beauty, and in the feeble, variable breeze in the Straits of Malacca it did more work than all the regular heavy sails. I was proud of the sail and I loved to lie on the lee deck and look up at the full, graceful curve against the blue and white sky. For three days this jib had pulled us along the low green coast of the Malay Peninsula; inland the dark blue mountains were broken by lines and scrolls of white clouds. At sunset the town of Malacca was abeam, and to the westward the great mass of Sumatra lay invisible under a threatening bank of black clouds. A procession of steamers laid their lines of smoke, northwest and southeast; Chinese junks hung motionless on the horizon or, finding breeze, crisscrossed the Strait; over the shoals, fleets of tiny Malay fishing craft worked in and out like red-winged butterflies.

The days had been hot but easy; the nights were long as we dodged through one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and we were anxious for the clean open sea away from the danger of being sliced in half by a sharp-prowed liner or tangling rigging with a hundred-ton junk.

Gerry said, "I'll be glad to get out of Sampan Alley," and went below to sleep.

We were slopping along in a light westerly and big jumbo, the jib, was doing all the work. The night was clear except for the low bank of clouds over Sumatra that showed with the dull flashes of distant lightning. I hoped that we would have no squalls tonight, for every night since Singapore we had been up and down handling sails and I longed to spend a full watch below. The breeze from the west picked up and felt cool and I was cheered by the gurgle of the wake and the slight tug on the wheel. I noticed in the southwest there were no more stars, then I concentrated for a quarter of an hour on the range lights of two steamers, one leaving and one entering the port of Malacca. The wind suddenly shifted to southwest and blew fresh. I eased off the sheets and, looking to windward, saw a high bank of clouds eating up the stars. It was coming up fast. I called all hands; big jumbo was straining and there was no use risking our pride and joy.

“Set the staysail first,” I said, anxiously looking to windward— it was solid black. The staysail was set and the big jib half-way in when I heard that whine of wind aloft. A solid wall of wind and rain struck the ship. The jib, torn from the halyard and the sheet, whipped off the bowsprit and disappeared down wind.

I jumped forward to give a hand on the main and we got her in just in time, for the wind had increased until we were scuppers under with only the mizzen and staysail showing. You had to hold yourself against the wind, which showed no signs of letting up. It was a full-fledged “Sumatra,” so terrifyingly described in the pilot book. It rained so hard I could not see much beyond the bowsprit. The sea was short and steep and spray was coming over in clouds. I was nearly in tears at the loss of big jumbo, the jib, and we took in the mizzen just to be safe; but the staysail, bowing the forestay, took us along at a good five knots. I went down below, stripped, and rubbed down with a towel and shivered— cold water and malaria do not mix. If it were not for the shipping, I thought, I could sleep.

When I went back on deck, dressed for the weather, I sent Hector down to make hot tea and Gerry went forward to the main shrouds. “Look!” he cried pointing. And on the crest of a wave a tiny open boat with a rag of sail on a fish-pole mast came charging down wind across our bow. In the stern a lone figure crouched with two hands clutching a steering paddle. She was planing on the sea like a surfboard. In a fraction of a minute she was gone, either under a sea that had curled up over her stern, or beyond our limited visibility. We would never know in the height of a “Sumatra’s” fury.

By two o’clock in the morning it was lighter and the wind was less. The rain stopped suddenly and the wind died, leaving us wallowing until daylight, when an easterly breeze took us up the coast to Port Dickson, where we anchored behind the protection of an off-lying island, and went ashore at once to call on the man who kept tigers.

Negri Sembilan is only twenty odd miles from Port Dickson, and it was not long after we had called Ryves that he showed up on the jetty with his car, and a Malay who was to help Hector watch the ship. The “Sumatra” of the night before had all but flooded the town and debris was piled over the breakwater. Ryves, tall and gaunt, came off to look at the ship; we had a drink of Scotch around, and went ashore. Ryves drove across the coastal plain until we came to a detour around a huge dredge that had eaten its way right through the

highway.

“That’s a tin dredge,” said Ryves; “do you want to stop?”

“If there’s time. . . .”

We stopped. It was the biggest dredge I had ever seen, and a long endless chain of buckets was digging up the swamp, making a canal to float the dredge. The unmistakable voice of a citizen from Australia asked us aboard. Ryves introduced us as “the two chaps who were spending three years sailing around the world in a small boat.”

“God Almighty,” said the Aussie, “’ow in the ’ell do you myke a living?”

“We don’t,” I said.

“Three years and ’ow many thousand miles ’ave you travelled?”

“Before we get home, we’ll have probably sailed over thirty thousand.”

“That’s a fair dinkum cruise, mytes. I’ve been cruising a bit meself. You see that ’ill back there?”

“Yea.”

“You see that point o’ land that makes out this side of it?”

“Yea.”

“Well, I’ve been just three years syling this bastard from there to ’ere and it ain’t more’n two mile.”

“Did you have a good passage?” I laughed.

“It’s the syme all the way, the bloody syme, digging up this ’ere black mud full o’ crocodiles and snykes and dumpin’ into this ’ere rotatin’ cylinder and washin’ it down. The tin drops in the bottom and these ’ere coolies shovel ’er out.”

“The F.M.S. is the tin centre of the world,” offered Ryves.

“An’ this bloody swamp is the mosquito ’eadquarters.”



The endless chain of heavy steel buckets ate its way through the macadam-surfaced highway with the ease of a knife cutting cheese, and we jumped ashore.

We wound up through the hills between alternate patches of jungle and the orderly rows of rubber trees. I complained a little about the Malayan jungle, for my mental picture was from a Frank Buck cinema. Ryves said the real jungle was north and west; through this section most of the land had been cleared and planted in rubber; but in the older estates, where the trees were no longer profitable to tap, the underbrush had come up and the game was moving back in. It was then that I broached the subject about *his* tiger.

“Oh! Blang,” he said. “I shipped him off to the London Zoo last year.”

“The stories circulating around Singapore are that you kept a nine-foot tiger loose around the house,” I said.

“Blang was a house cat; why he only weighed a hundred pounds and was scarcely six feet long to the tip of his tail!” said Ryves in defence of his former pet.

Gerry said to me, “That’s considerable cat—*mucho gato!*”

“I have pictures of Blang,” said Ryves. “I’ll show them to you.

We were beyond Rantau and in a few minutes pulled up in front of the Linsum estate, “Ryves’s bungalow.” It was a huge old house with marble floors below and immense bedrooms upstairs. A neighbouring planter, *Tuan* Brown, came in, and we had whisky and soda and looked at Ryves’s photographs of his pet tiger, which showed the animal from kittenhood to killer.

“He would stalk anything,” said Ryves sadly. “I hated shipping him off. I didn’t mind him killing a few fowl or even a goat, but when he started after my Tamil labourer’s children, and once treed Brown’s Malay chauffeur, I realized that the jungle instincts had claimed Blang. Once a tiger, always a tiger. . . . More whisky?”

“Thanks.”

“We’ll have dinner in half an hour,” said Ryves, passing the siphon bottle.

Outside it was quite dark, and the jungle coming to life with hundreds of little sounds reminded me of Nicaragua. A small gekko stalked a moth across the lamp shade and the tiny vertebrae and pulsating ribs were visible from the light shining through the thin body.

Planters, like farmers, are early risers; and Ryves was up before the sun, dressed in khaki shorts and walking shoes. We had bread and butter with tea, and, in the cool sunrise, started following Ryves's long legs through the barred shadows of a forest of rubber trees. The trees are tapped much like a pine tree for turpentine, and the little containers underneath the stripped bark catch the thick, milky liquid. The native Malays, like the Polynesians, will not work excepting as houseboys and chauffeurs, so the labour is imported from southern India; and the temples and gods, colourful costumes, and brass jewellery of these Tamils have been transplanted and prolifically reproduced on the soil of the Malayan Peninsula. We wandered through old groves and productive groves and cleared fields with new rubber being planted in contours. By ten o'clock it was hot, and we were stiff and hungry when we arrived back at the bungalow for breakfast. Our host said, "I'll just have tea and biscuits, but my cook will have breakfast for you chaps."

At the table there were two places set, and on a platter reposed a huge Muscovy duck roasted to a deep, rich brown. From that moment on our identification in Malay was changed; we no longer were introduced at curry tiffins as "the two Americans who are sailing around the world in a small yacht," but as "the two chaps who ate the ten-pound duck for breakfast." For, under the astonished eyes of our host, Gerry and I licked the platter clean; the carcass looked as if it had been a week on an anthill.

We spent an afternoon at the club having *stingahs* with the prominent Empire Builders in the once prosperous rubber district, but now the market was so depressed that the managers were just hanging on at greatly reduced salaries. . . . "If you Americans would buy more rubber . . ." The Japanese menace was definitely a knot in the lion's tail, but it had been reported that they could not shoot straight. Local topics were a few mild scandals. One chap had promised to marry a local girl, but went home to England and came back with a new wife. His character was maligned with the words "cad" and "bounder," whereas in Australia the situation would have been handled with two more colourful words. Another chap in the forties had married a girl in the twenties, and the British hinted at the biological phenomena that would create an open challenge

for subsequent adultery.

We went to a large curry tiffin where there was a suckling pig roasted whole with crisp crackling at each end of the table. There was quiet speculation around the table and a few bets placed whether the chaps who had eaten a ten-pound duck for breakfast could also finish off a whole suckling pig for tiffin.

Much to our sorrow our allotted time in Negri Sembilan was limited to exactly four days, for the *Hurricane* was to pick up a passenger in Fort Dickson; a friend of ours in Singapore, an officer in the Gordon Highlanders by the name of Moir-Byers, was taking his leave with us as far as Colombo. He was a keen yachtsman and we looked forward to his company across the Bay of Bengal.

Ryves drove us back to salt water and we moved Scotchman Moir-Byers aboard, complete with bagpipes, which we eyed with considerable trepidation, wondering whether the night watch would be shattered by “The Cock-o’-the-north.” Moir-Byers, looking over our sea stores, was satisfied by the complete stock of “Dungan’s Dew” by Donnolly, but complained about the lack of oatmeal aboard. I quoted Samuel Johnson’s lexical definition of oats as food “only for Scotchmen and horses,” and we got off to a good start.

At sea, we again lived on light variables, calms, and squalls; four and a half days we chased the wind two hundred and thirty miles around the Straits of Malacca before we anchored among a fleet of junks at Georgetown on the island of Penang. But it was a pleasant trip, for the monotony of our own conversation had been relieved by our new companion. Penang, with tall coconut palms leaning over the sand beach and a two-thousand-foot mountain green to its summit, is very much like the high islands in the South Pacific, except that it is hotter, and then there is Georgetown, which is an Eastern city.

We took a taxi to the consulate, where a Malay boy ushered us into the presence of Tuan vice-consul John Peabody Palmer. We read our mail forwarded from Singapore, and Palmer asked, “How about lunch?”

He was enthusiastic about sailing, and over cool gin *pahits* explained that he was confronted not only with a six weeks’ leave but a transfer to Saigon, Indo-China. He was at loose ends about his leave and asked us questions about Bali and Java.

“Have you been to Ceylon?” I asked.

“No,” said Palmer.

“Then why not sign on the *Hurricane*? There’s plenty of room.” “I can’t leave until the consul from Nairobi takes over.” “When’s that?”

“He should be here in three days.”

“Will you go?”

“Sure!”

“Then come on down and see the ship and meet your fellow-passenger, Moir-Byers.”

But leaving Penang was not as simple as we had anticipated; although Palmer’s relief came from Nairobi on schedule, it was nearly a week before the round of farewell parties (Palmer had lived in Penang three years) was over. Moir-Byers was chafing over the delay and we had difficulty convincing him that we would find the pilot book promised wind in the Bay of Bengal. I even had difficulty convincing myself, because the *Hurricane* had not experienced a fresh steady breeze since the Arafura Sea last August, and here it was the first of December. In the meantime we careened the ship and scraped her until the copper bottom shone.

On the afternoon of December second, we moved slowly out of the harbour past a Dollar liner loading bricks of tin that glistened like white gold, past a Jap and a German and Blue Funnel liner. By dark the sea buoy was astern and, dropping the land, we pointed the open sea for the first time in many months.

Forward, the disciples of Anthony Eden and Cordell Hull renamed the fore-stateroom, the Black Hole of Calcutta; and during the dog-watch the cockpit was crowded, tall tales were told and calm-weather arguments started that, lacking an Encyclopaedia Britannica aboard, would only be stopped by a fresh breeze. Each morning I examined the doldrum sky for a sign of the northeast monsoon, but dead hot air hung over the sea under low, still clouds; at night, heat lightning flashed on the horizon. In six days we made only three hundred miles. Then the sky cleared and orderly ranks of white puffy clouds came out of the northeast and the first fresh draft of air from the monsoon, cooled by the highland of Asia, rushed out across the Bay of Bengal; the blue sea danced and spilled over in little white caps; the *Hurricane*, cheered by the wind, lay over and went to

work singing a six-knot tune, and depression was gone with the muggy grey clouds.

We lifted the Nicobars out of the sea and anchored in land-blocked Nancowry Harbour, where the natives came off to trade. For a rusty cane knife and a fathom of calico, we bought a sixty-pound black pig, a bunch of bananas and four scraggly chickens; and again the light of murder glinted from Hector's placid eye as he whetted the bright steel blade of the butcher knife. The Nicobars dropped astern and ahead lay India.

Tuan consul named the black pig "Andrew," and Tuan Scotchman objected; Hector hated the pig more than he had hated our Lord Howe Island duck, and the impassioned: "Capitan, when I go keel zees peeg, zees bloody bastard?" came with every deck scrubbing, and not until the pig was executed on the boom gallows did harmony reign aboard the ship. But the ship was at peace with the weather and with little fuss crashed out her lee wake across the Bay of Bengal until we ran out of the blue water and into a rain that obscured the low coast of India, north of Ceylon. We felt our way into shoal Palk Bay, crossing the four-fathom bar in a breaking mud-coloured sea. Then it cleared and the full moon guided us along the north coast of Ceylon. In the morning, India was off the starboard hand and ahead a railway drawbridge blocked the pass at Pamban into the Gulf of Manar. We rounded up into the wind and lay-to under full sail with the headsails aback, waiting for the pilot, who was coming off in a white whaleboat with eight Indians, naked from the waist up, straining on the long oars; smashing to windward over the choppy muddy water the crew chanted to time the strokes. The pilot jumped aboard and we slacked off the sheets, the railway bridge yawned and we slid through with a strong fair tide into the quiet water in the lee of Pamban town.

Tuan consul and Gerry, after combing the town for fresh food, came aboard with only a dozen eggs and a fish. The pilot collected twelve rupees and his piratical crew begged cigarettes as we got underway in a good hard breeze that was straight from the north. Dead before the monsoon we raced with the sails winged out and boom tackles made fast to the chain plates; the helmsman straddled the wheel and looked straight ahead, keeping the sound of the wind equal in each ear to prevent a jibe as the steep curling seas foamed past. Eight to nine knots south through the night we sang, and the clouds flying over the lopsided face of a moon, just past full, flashed sweeping patches of light and dark on water creased hard by the wind.

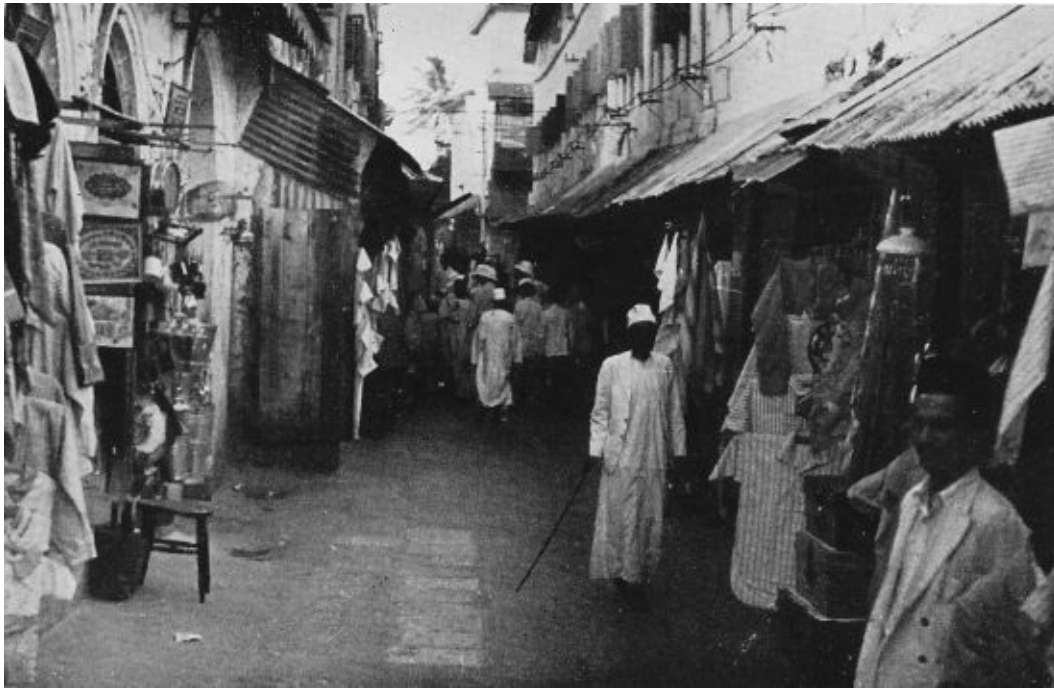
In the morning we closed with the land and by noon the buildings of Colombo, yellow and white squares in the sunlight, lifted up out of the sea. We were on schedule and Tuan Scotchman was elated, for the spectre of court-martial that had hovered aboard in the doldrums was gone with the port ahead. We slipped in between the breakwaters of the artificial harbour behind a native brigantine and ahead of a British freighter that snorted in disgust. The pilot took us to our berth close to the landing, and we changed clothes and went ashore to the land of tea and teak, elephants and Singhalese, bound for the famous Galle Face Hotel, where Palmer had agreed to assume the obligations of the "Captain's dinner" with "champagne laid on like water to a jetty."

Moir-Byers caught the first ship for Singapore; Gerry went up in the hills to Kandy; while Palmer and I, for no reason at all, boarded a train for Nuwara Eliya and spent Christmas shivering in tropical garb at six thousand feet, and warming up with sherry before a log fire in the hotel. Then Palmer sailed for Indo-China. Gerry and I, back aboard the ship, were confronted with an empty fore-stateroom and a leaking stuffing box; the latter was fixed in a day, along with the clutch, but the former was taken care of by fate.

It was very simple: One day in a bar we met a man moderately bending an elbow—his name was Bill Cross and he was homeward bound to East London, South Africa, via the British India line. Spoiled by the shorter watches of the past month, I offered to sail him home in the *Hurricane*. Although he had not seen the ship and had never been to sea in anything less than five thousand tons, he accepted at once and refunded his ticket. The next day he moved aboard and that night we sailed for Africa. It was New Year's Eve and it rained hard; and Bill, as all our other guests, was introduced to the hand windlass to pump up the two-hundred-pound hook on considerable scope of half-inch chain. Out through the harbour and past two long, grey French warships we chugged into the wind and rain toward the red blurry light on the breakwater's end. In the morning Bill awoke seventy-five miles at sea; and, I think, for the first time realized that ahead was twenty-seven hundred miles of Indian Ocean. Slowly he began to comprehend distance like a student of astronomy and asked fearfully how long it would be to the next land.

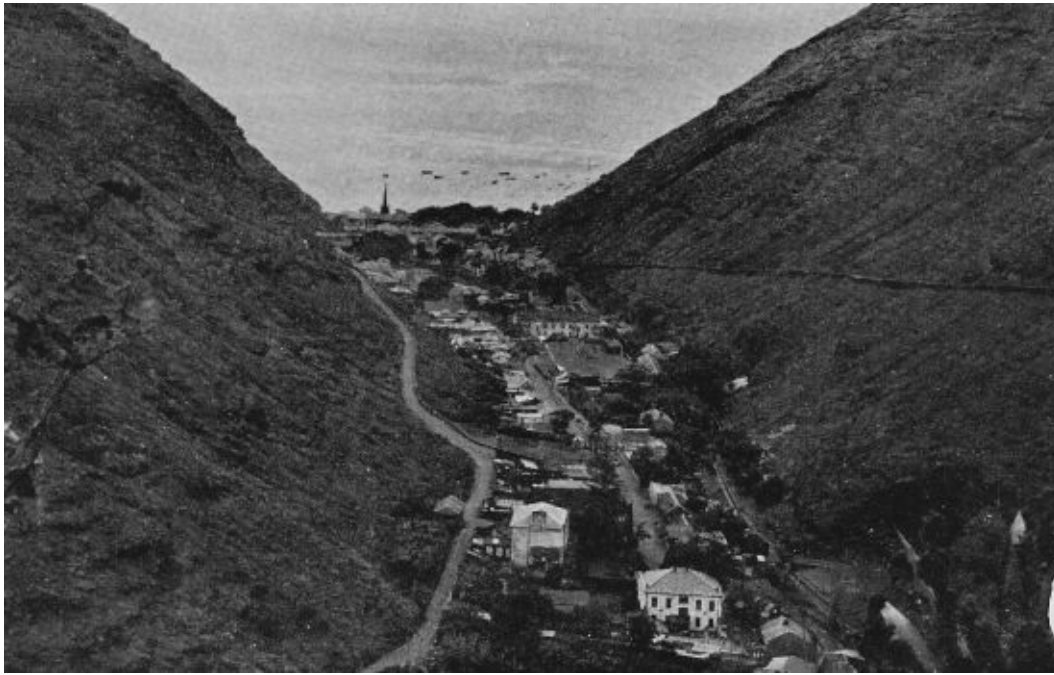


*The Singapore River is choked with sampans and busy with lighters.*



*Zanzibar's narrow streets.*





*Jamestown, St. Helena, is built along a single street.*



*The careenage in Barbados where Nova Scotia men exchange timber for sugar and rum.*

## Chapter XXVIII

**AHEAD** in the night was a dark line of land, the low sickle of the old moon made a broken line of yellow over a sea that was scarcely breathing, the light easterly that was taking us in died and then a faint suggestion of a land breeze brought off the aromatic smell of cloves. We lay quite still until sunrise when the monsoon came back, and we sailed into the lee of the palm-fringed shore and soft contoured hills of the Island of Zanzibar; off the starboard hand, invisible from the deck, lay the great continent of Africa.

It was the twenty-seventh sunrise since that New Year's morning off Ceylon when Bill Cross on unsteady legs had desperately surveyed the vast expanse of wind-swept sea. Now it was behind us, this long slow passage in the fickle monsoon that had given so few good days' runs. Twenty-seven pages from the log book told a monotonous story with but few exceptions:

*Jan. 7. 9 p.m.* "Bill jibed the mizzen, knocking Gerry cold in the scuppers."

The action of the wind and the sails and the compass with its diamonds, triangles, and lines, were a mystery to Bill, but he was a good companion, unaffected by the monotony of the passage.

*Jan. 11.* "This morning we collected eighty-two flying fish on deck. Most of them came aboard during the first watch and sounded like hail on the deck."

*Jan. 14. Noon. Lat. 4°-38' N. Long. 56° 21' E.* "We had a good fresh breeze for the last twenty-four hours averaging force 4 to 5 but made only 149 miles good. The bottom is very foul and schools of dolphin are following the ship after a tiny striped fish that live around the rudder. Hector speared three dolphins."

*Jan. 17. 3 p.m.* "Hard rain squall—took in topsail—all hands enjoyed fresh water bath. The rain lasted long enough for Hector to wash all the galley towels."

*2 a.m.* "A shark bit the spinner off the log line."

*Jan. 22. Noon. Lat. 0° 54' S. Long. 43° 51' E. “Last night we crossed the Equator.”*

*Jan. 24. 6 a.m. calm. “Noon—flat calm.*

*“Hector and I went overboard to look at the bottom. She was very foul with clusters of sharp-lipped barnacles and festoons of slimy marine spinach. The propeller looked like a bit of coral reef. We tried scrapers, but it was hard to work under water for the sea was too lumpy and our knuckles and arms were badly cut by the razor sharp barnacles. With a lung full of air, I was hacking away at the encrusted propeller when I noticed that Hector’s brown legs were no longer kicking around. We were one thousand miles from land. I came up for a breath and Gerry and Hector quickly grabbed an arm to help me over the side. I looked down and saw the streamlined body of a great brown shark so close that I could have easily kicked him on the nose. Lining the rail, we referred disrespectfully to his ancestors until the monster disappeared into the cobalt depths.”*

Many green palm-studded islets dot the straits between Zanzibar and Africa; the water is dark blue in the channels, and pale blue over the shoals; from the sea the whitewashed town is like a mirage above the fringe of palms; open fishing dhows with a single lateen sail worked out in the straits and a black steamer indicated the roadstead.

We were land hungry and the wind, anxious to redeem itself after twenty-seven playful days, blew in earnest, responding to our impatient desire to get ashore, and sent us scurrying down the coast to an anchorage behind a breakwater among a cluster of dhows and lighters.

On the jetty, Gerry said, “Now, Coppy, let’s get all our business finished before you establish yourself in a pub.”

“It’s high noon,” I said, squinting my eyes to the dazzling light of the white streets and buildings, “and all the officials will be out for lunch.”

A negro in a long white nightgown and a fez approached us with, “African Hotel?”

I nodded and he ushered us into a wide-seated rickshaw. Bill Cross climbed in another and followed us up the street past warehouses of cloves and the Sultan’s

palace with a six-metre boat in the front yard. Then we wound up through narrow streets lined with little Indian shops; women walked about in black veils, and there were hawk-faced Arabs, in white tunics drawn about the waist by a belt with a large hooked silver-sheathed dagger attached.

In the African Hotel we were welcomed by the proprietor, who was a Greek. There were no other guests. We had a cool beer in the stone-flagged court, ordered food, and relaxed, grateful to be out of the intense glare of the sun with no watch to stand. Two men came in and ordered drinks in the true American language. We introduced ourselves at once and learned that they were the captain and chief engineer of an American freighter bound for Mombasa and then back home around the Cape. After another round of beer we exchanged invitations aboard our respective ships and departed for the customs and the first day's duties in port. Later we ran into the crew on the streets and went off with them to their ship. The captain was not aboard but the boys showed us over the boat. After the tiny *Hurricane*, she seemed as safe and solid as land itself, and we remarked about the comparative luxury of the crew's quarters with their spring bunks and electric fans. Then we gathered around the mess for an early dinner, and the fare was more sumptuous than the *Hurricane* ever enjoyed at sea. Naturally, with all the ignorance of the uninformed, I broached the subject of the maritime strife and strikes, the news of which had filtered through to us from magazine articles, months old, about the very distant happenings in far-off America. Naively, I said over a cup of coffee with a full cargo of groceries under my belt, "What have you guys got to complain about with a dry bed and three squares a day, not much work, and to hell with the weather? You see the world and even get paid for it."

This bombshell started an argument that would never end in logic, most of it dealt with *rights* to this and *rights* to do that. They were rather vague as to the benefits they would receive from their ultimatum of *rights*, but the reasoning was quoted and they were the stock quotations of communism. It never occurred to any of them that if their unions had their unrestricted way they would legislate themselves out of existence, for the American Merchant Marine would be forced from the sea. Almost three years we had been away from the States, yet it was the first time I had heard this New American philosophy, that individual initiative and ingenuity should be suppressed, for any man with pride in his ship and a desire to study navigation for a mate's ticket was immediately branded with the awful stigma of "company man" and was liable to bodily damage.

Eight days south of Zanzibar at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel, the fair monsoon went into the west and died when the sun set livid and red. It was the hurricane season in the South Indian Ocean; the barometer, fortunately, was steady, performing only its regular tropical diurnal change; but the stars looked through a haze and there was thunder over Africa. Until morning we lay becalmed, when a wind that smelled of rain and dust came from the west bringing sudden life to the ship, inert in the hush of a dull slate dawn.

“Look!” I shouted to Gerry. “There’s a bat!”

A small black bat circled in the lee of the mainsail, clutched vainly at the shrouds and fell into the sea.

“What in the hell is a bat doing out here?” asked Gerry.

“He was blown out.”

“But we’re a good thirty miles off shore.”

“That’s just it, and down comes the canvas.”

Bill and Hector came on deck and we took in the topsail and the main while a dense mass of black clouds moving out of the grey horizon enveloped the ship, the rigging whined a warning and a hard squall, whipping the sea across the deck, pressed the rail under, and for an hour we smashed south in a blinding rain.

“This,” I said, “is what killed our fair wind.”

Suddenly it cleared, the sun poured down, the wind dropped and we set all sail awaiting the return of the fair monsoon, but smoky clouds stayed to the southward and the monsoon never returned; instead a good hard wind caught us on the nose. It couldn’t last, I thought, but it did, and, increasing in force, blowing up against that great southerly drift, the Agulhas current, piled up a steep breaking sea. The season had reversed more than a month ahead of schedule and Durban was twelve hundred miles dead to windward. From the comparative peace and quiet of fair wind work, we resigned ourselves to the pitching, smashing, plunging battle of beating a small ship to windward in a heavy sea.

On the port tack we would close with the coast of Africa, on the starboard tack, work our way east and south and towards Madagascar, and when the wind would shift a point or two I called all hands to bring the ship about. It was a race to beat the winter gales around the Cape of Good Hope, and even now, fourteen degrees south of the Equator, the wind at night was cold from its antarctic origin. The canting decks were never dry as we plunged back and forth across Mozambique Channel. The wind flag aloft was torn to ribbons, the chafing gear on the shrouds lay back like the ears of an angry dog, and the wet sheets were thin and hard. There was not the steady heel or gentle roll of the trades, but the breath-taking gyrations of a little ship crashing into tons and tons of wind-driven water. The bat that had warned of the wind had been the symbol of adversity.

Our backs were tired from straining on the jib sheets and sweating up the back stays; but when Gerry and I, with feet braced, pulled shoulder to shoulder to trim the big jib, we expressed the thought that there was just one more corner to turn, only one more point of land to round, and then we could start across the last ocean. The *Hurricane* was homeward bound and we fought the weather with a will, and with the help of the current were rewarded with fifty or sixty miles southing each day.

For days we thrashed about and the wind was a strong force six; yet we carried full sail to make good against the steep sea, for only a tall rig could drive our wooden wedge against the weather. And then one noon Gerry was down below with Hector, juggling the pots and pans on the bucking gimbal stove, building a chicken stew with the last of our Zanzibar hens; it was my watch, and Bill Cross, keeping me company in the cockpit, was ducking the spray and watching the ship climb up out of the blue valleys, smash a groove in the crest, and slide down into the next. To keep well offshore into the strength of the current it was time to come about. The wind headed us a little and I called Hector to give a hand on the jib. Holding her off to keep plenty of headway, I watched the sea, waiting for the moment to bring her up quickly in a relatively smoother expanse of water. A breaker spilled over the rail at the chain plates forward, then I quickly put the helm hard over and she came up into the wind until the sails luffed like thunder. The sheet blocks on the main and mizzen banged from side to side on the traveller; the decks vibrated from the shaking canvas. Slowly she filled on the other tack and the rigging was quiet. Suddenly, while all hands were hauling on the jib sheet, a hard gust of wind on the crest of the sea knocked the ship down. I heard a crash from below and a “what the hell” from Gerry, and I knew that the chicken stew was in the bilge.

Then just as the jib was sheeted home and fast around the cleat, both main shrouds to the crosstrees carried away and the mast looped around like a whip. Any second, I thought, would see the mainmast crash over the side. The back stays held and took part of the strain but the mast leaned far over, bent in an incredible curve. Quickly I slacked off the mizzen sheet and ran before the wind while all hands took in the topsail, the main and the staysail. Under jib and mizzen, we flew down wind. The mast settled down and decided to stay in the ship and we fastened the peak and throat halyards to the chain plates. The shrouds were five-eighth-inch diameter galvanized rigging wire and showed little signs of rust, but they had parted at the seizing around the splice.

Sixty miles down wind was the Portuguese port of Mozambique. There we could repair the ship in smooth water. We worked in close to the African coast and the sea was less, and at sunset picked up the lighthouse at the harbour entrance. In six hours we had lost twenty-four hours of hard windward work, but the strong yellow pine mast that we had known as a tree in a Mississippi timber reserve had stayed in the ship after the supreme test.

“We’ll rest a day or two in port,” I said, as we worked up the channel in smooth water, “and maybe we’ll catch a fair wind.”

“Even a calm would help,” said Gerry, “and we can drift south in the current.”

The harbour was well lighted and we anchored off the little town just after nine o’clock; and, dead tired from the constant muscular effort of balancing, went to sleep on level bunks in a ship that was strangely quiet.

At sea again the sun was warm and the wind was light but fair. In Mozambique we had spliced the shrouds with a length of new wire. The Portuguese had been kind to a ship in distress and had sent two riggers aboard from a government machine shop, free of charge, to help with the repairs. We had bought a box of mostly good eggs, a very salty smoked ham, and two fat ducks. Prosperity was aboard again and the ship was on her course, the slate clouds to the southward had been blown away and all the horizons were clear. Without effort we were slipping south, changing our latitude from two to three degrees each day. We crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and the weather was cooler at night. Then it fell calm and we lay out in Delagoa Bay watching the shipping steer in and out of the city of Lourenco-Marques, the capital of Portuguese East Africa, until restlessness drove us into port under power. The excuse was fresh eggs but



we really wanted to go to town.

“We’ll just stay overnight,” I said as we crossed the bay to the river’s mouth and anchored off the town. But we found a carnival in full swing, and it was five days before we went to sea again, and a fair wind had come and gone. Hector had spent a bad three days with the sailors on the Portuguese fishing fleet and we sailed with a bunk-ridden hand.

“That’s the worst hangover I’ve ever seen,” said Gerry, nodding towards Hector’s prone figure.

I took his temperature just to be sure and found it 104°. By dark he was unable to get up, and I cut the top out of an empty five-gallon kerosene tin and placed it alongside of his bunk. It was nearly three hundred miles to Durban, there was not very much breeze and I did not like the look of the sky. It was streaked with feathery cirrus clouds. The next day a light breeze came out of the south and by noon it shifted to the east, the barometer dropped a little and there was a haze over the sky that disappeared with a sunset that painted great swirls of cirrus clouds an unhealthy red. In the morning it was blowing hard from the northeast and we took in the mizzen, the jib, and the main topsail, and we raced before a rising sea. But steadily the wind increased until under whole mainsail she was so hard to steer that running dead before it was dangerous, and I wanted to check her wild, plunging speed. Hector’s fever was still high and he was utterly helpless. It was imperative to reach Durban as quickly as possible. The barometer was steady now but the sky was leaden and every hour the wind increased. The ship was pressed deep in the water and the seas were piling up and crashing all around.

“If we want to come in with a whole ship, we’ve got to slow down,” I said to Gerry. “Let Bill hold her and you and I will take in the main.”

It was a struggle. Gerry went forward, loosened the halyards, and came aft to give me a hand hauling on the vang (a line to the peak of the gaff).—it was like pulling on a five-hundred-square-foot kite, but we finally got it in, tucked in a double reef and set it again.

Still the wind increased and Gerry said, “The more canvas we take in, the harder it blows.”

We hung on until the middle of the afternoon and then we had a whole gale on

our hands, and I thought of the shrouds that parted off Mozambique. By four o'clock it was as dark as twilight and the wind was shifty, varying suddenly two to three points between north and east. There was no rain but spray was driving over the length of the ship. A large sea broke under the counter and the top came aboard, flooding the cockpit.

"That's enough!" I shouted. "We'll try heaving-to under double reefed main."

Bill and Gerry hauled on the heavy mainsheet and I put the helm over slowly; but the ship came around like a whirlwind, charged into a black wall of water and, losing headway, fell off to within four points of the wind, and there she lay quietly and steadily. It is a strange sensation heaving-to a ship after running before a gale; it is like anchoring in the lee of an island. Resigned to the elements, responsibility is gone, for the struggle is over, but the victor is kind and a ship let alone is cradled by sea. The gale is stronger than the men, but not stronger than the ship. For a while we watched the *Hurricane* rising and falling buoyantly over the heavy seas, but always giving way to its force. After lashing a hurricane lantern on deck, we went below, cooked and ate a large dinner, then drifted off to sleep listening to the gale aloft howling and shrieking through the rigging.

In the morning the haze was gone from the sky, the wind was less, and we got under, steering west for the African coast. It was dark when we hove-to off the breakwater at Port Natal and, waiting in vain for a pilot, spoke to a fishing trawler outward bound, who told us the port was closed until daylight. I yelled across, "We have a sick hand aboard.... Can we go on in without a pilot?"

"No! The port's closed, but if it's a matter of life or death I can land him," came from the trawler.

I ducked below and asked Hector if he could stand another night at sea. He said he felt better and would rather enter with the ship in the morning.

"Thanks just the same," I shouted and waved the trawler on, and we lay-to in an easy swell with a faint land breeze, watching the lights of Durban.

Just after daylight we followed the pilot boat inside; the port doctor came aboard at once and carried Hector to the hospital, where we learned the next day that he had not only malignant malaria, but dysentery and hemorrhoids. It would be at least a fortnight before he could return aboard.

Durban is a city of wide streets and modern buildings between the sea and a lagoon checkered with brown shoals, where the *Hurricane* lay moored to a buoy a quarter of a mile from the landing. It was a longish row in the dinghy, but every afternoon when the sun was over the yardarm we pulled with a will for the landing, walked across the esplanade to the Royal Natal Yacht Club where we bathed, slipped into white clothes, and then leaned over the long bar for an hour or two, desperately trying to buy a drink which we were unable to do, unless we arrived early when the bar was deserted, for a member of the oldest royal chartered club in Africa was stationed at either elbow to sign the chit. The leader of this assault on our sobriety was Vice-Commodore George Binnie; and, soon realizing that we could not do without him, we signed him on the *Hurricane* for the trip around the Cape. Bill Cross, after several exchanges of letters and wires with his father in East London, had left us under paternal pressure to take a job at Johannesburg; and we signed on another hand, George Binnie's right-hand man, Robbin Homewood. With a full crew it would be possible to keep two men on watch, and I felt happier about rounding the Cape in the first month of winter, for the Cape of Good Hope has a bad reputation. But all weather is a matter of chance, and the percentage of fine weather even in notoriously bad places is usually higher than the pilot book or local skippers would lead you to believe. However, I checked every inch of running and standing rigging on the ship and, condemning the main shrouds, renewed them with three-quarter-inch diameter wire soaked in Stockholm tar. And after the splicing was finished and the turnbuckles set up, I said to Gerry, "There's one thing that will never come out of this ship, and that's the mainmast."

But the biggest improvement in the *Hurricane* was done in one day by the official cyanide and sulphuric man in a gas mask who fumigated the ship, and all of Hector's galley pets and our bed-fellows died a sudden death. Even the ship's clock stopped. The next afternoon when the shadows were long on the esplanade I met the exterminator in the yacht club.

"Your cyanide gas," I said, "stopped our ship's clock."

"Impossible."

"But it stopped at exactly the same time as your man dropped the cyanide in the acid."

“A remarkable coincidence, but it is quite impossible for the gas to affect the works of a clock.”

Then a jeweler offered to do a post-mortem and bring the verdict to the next meeting. When he brought the clock back he said he had found the works clogged with dead cockroaches and even a spider complete with web; when alive, the insets in the clock had kept away from the little gears for self-preservation.

When Hector came back aboard, pale and weak and full of stories with graphic gesticulations concerning his recent hemorrhoid operation, we breathed a sigh of relief and fired his substitute, a very incompetent and smelly Zulu boy whom we had named “Rancid Rastis.” And the air in the galley, again reeking of Hector’s constant application of scented hair oil, was more tolerable to breathe than the heavy atmosphere around “Rancid Rastis.” In a few days Hector was able to work, and at a dead high tide we warped the ship alongside the jetty off the Point Yacht Club, where we scraped off another crop of marine growth, and made final preparations to go to sea. Our two new hands moved their gear aboard, and now there was only the Cape of Good Hope and the Royal Natal Yacht Club’s eighty-eighth anniversary between us and the Atlantic Ocean. Gerry and I, speculating on which would be the toughest, warped ourselves into the part of our dress clothes that had withstood the ravages of mildew and cockroaches, borrowed the remainder from friends, and with some trepidation strolled across the esplanade for the anniversary dinner.

We found the club with a full complement of men, one hundred and eighty strong, making heavy weather of it; and, after several “Cheerio’s,” “Here’s luck’s,” and “God Bless’s,” all hands trooped aloft to the banquet table. There were toasts and speeches with shouts of “Hear! Hear!” and there was a bottle of Scotch between each two men. We came in for our share when Commodore Brown gave the “Yanks” more than their due in entering Durban harbour with a proper ship and earnestly regretting our sailing day. I replied with a speech that failed to convey the sincerity we felt about the club’s unparalleled hospitality. However, our real claim to fame was that we managed to walk aboard the *Hurricane* at four o’clock in the morning, for the next day we were presented with the club’s silk ensign!

It was April when we slipped out between the breakwaters and there was a winter chill in the air. For days a strong southwest wind had swept up the coast, but now it was calm, the sky promised rain and the weather bureau a northeaster. Praying for the latter, we set all sail and, cutting off the motor when we were well offshore, we waited for the wind. The ship was uneasy in the irregular swell, and both George Binnie and Robbie Homewood were seasick, but happy as schoolboys; it would be their first offshore cruise. At sunset the rain came straight down, cold and hard, and our new hands lay soaking in the scuppers, praying for the final relief of death. All night it rained, but at daylight the clouds lifted and the promised northeaster came in fresh, and with both wind and current astern we flew down the coast of Natal. George and Robbie came to life in the sun's warmth, took turns on the wheel, and watched the ship with the help of strong current make the phenomenal average of twelve nautical miles each hour. Gerry and I were singing on watch that the Cape was as good as astern; southwest we ploughed a wide path of foam with a consort of porpoises around the ship and white-winged albatrosses aloft. But the great blue river that brought the tropics south and gave us three knots for nothing soon left the coast and went to sea for the chilly reception of the borderless Antarctic Ocean. Fair wind, fine weather, and warm current left us all at once, and we plunged into cold green water, strong headwinds, and three days of rain, the cabin temperature dropped to 55° F., we lived day and night in oilskins over wet clothes. The farther south and west, the worse the weather; and when we finally beat into the lee of Algoa Bay all hands were ready to quit, and we did, in the windiest city on earth, Port Elizabeth, which we entered in the afternoon after sighting the harbour at sunrise. There, after three days of careful administering by the steward of the Port Elizabeth Club and the hands at the Yacht Club, we were slowly infused with enough warmth and enough strength from excellent food and three whole nights' sleep to go to sea again.

Sailing in a stiff northwest wind, we innocently poked our nose around the point and straight into a southwest gale sweeping the sea with horizontal torrents of rain that worked in under oilskins; we were miserable with the cold, and George and Robbie were seasick again. Under a short rig we smashed south to gain an offing (beating to windward was impossible in such a wind and sea) and hove-to, discouragingly to leeward of our departure, until dawn brought more moderate weather and a southerly breeze that shifted rapidly into the east. Underway, we shook out the reefs and, driving through a confused sea, sang again that the Cape was as good as astern. A light fog, low on the sea, obscured the rocky coast; but the distant mountains of Africa, blue-black, streaked with cloud-filled

valleys, rose above the mist. The wind held, the weather grew warmer, and the sun, occasionally finding holes through the grey sky, brought patches of vivid life to the sea. Just one more day of this weather, I thought, and Africa would be to the eastward—and then ahead would be America! But before daylight the fair wind died a sudden death; and then, without even the brief respite of a calm, a westerly wind cracked down hard and cold. Out of warm bunks into the stormy night came the hands below to help shorten sail, and then with double watches we began the cold cheerless job of thrashing about south of Africa's blunt heel in an ocean without boundaries.

As distant as a dream were the cobalt-blue ridges of a tropical sea, warm lazy undulations in a tired wind, or sparkling, dancing to the tune of a lively breeze; forgotten was the crystalline sky that pulled you up into the blue depths of infinity, and the soft nights when the helmsman could watch the sails curve under countless points of light and listen to the swish of the bow on the crest of a sea and the musical rippling of the wake, like a stream trickling over round stones.

Now there was no sky, for wet clouds swept across a sea that was pale with the cold of melting ice, and the helmsman, with a tense face to weather, clutched the wheel in numb wrinkled hands and watched the great seas rush out of a grey world of fog. Above the angry whine of wind came the thunder of surf on invisible Cape Agulhas, Africa's southernmost tip, and, bringing the ship about, we stood out to sea again with nothing ahead but Antarctica.

At sunset the weather cleared in the west and the mountain-tops on the Cape Peninsula looked like a chain of islands; and after dark the lighthouse on the Cape of Good Hope beckoned encouragingly across the black sea. We beat up into False Bay in the lee of the Cape; standing out to sea again found a stronger breeze that was followed by rain, and standing in again made not a ship's length to the good. All hands were crouched shivering in the cockpit, waiting for just one favourable slant of wind, but the rain came harder, the wind stronger, and on the next tack we made not an inch of westing and I dared not show more sail. The temperature was down to 45°!

"We're putting in to Simons Town," I chattered, "before we freeze to death."

Simons Town was a naval station on the eastern shore of the Cape Peninsula, and with the wind and rain abeam we anchored in behind the breakwater at daylight.

The weather cleared and, after a good hot breakfast, life was worth living again. A pinnace came alongside and the officer of the day from the flagship *Amphion* came aboard with a request to call on the Admiral at eleven o'clock. I accepted, but Gerry and George decided to take the trolley to Cape Town, and Robbie was already snoring under a pile of blankets forward, which left me to run the gauntlet of the South African division of the British Navy alone. I was dead tired and tempted by the siren sound of Robbie's snoring, but I managed to clean up and warp into shore clothes on the appointed hour when the pinnace returned and took me off to the landing.

At the Admiral's I answered a few questions about the trip and explained that we would wait for weather to round the Cape and then coast downhill for home. We had one "pink gin" (gin and bitters) and I left to call on the captain of the *Amphion*. "Then," I thought, "I can go aboard the *Hurricane* and sleep." But after one drink with the captain, the officer of the day announced, "The wardroom officers of the *Milford* are waiting for you."

It was not until midnight that I left the *Milford* and, walking across the breakwater, saw the *Hurricane* lying serenely at anchor on water alive with moonlight. I whistled for the dinghy and watched a dark object move away from the stern. A sailor from the *Amphion* standing nearby said admiringly, "Did you see that yawl come in under sail to-night?"

"It isn't a yawl," I said, "it's a ketch, and it didn't come in tonight under sail; it came this morning at daylight under power."

"No," he said emphatically, "I was standin' just 'ere and she come in under sail an hour ago."

"You're crazy," I said angrily. "She's my own ship and I brought her in here myself at exactly seven o'clock this morning."

"I ain't crazy, mate, I just seen her sail in with my own eyes."

"Damn it, don't I know my own ship?"

"Well, I ain't been drinkin'. I know my eyes are good and I tell you she just come in 'ere under sail."

The dinghy scraped alongside, but it was not the *Hurricane's* dinghy, and Hector

was not in it, but a stranger. I thought: Gerry probably has visitors aboard. I climbed in the skiff and shouted something to my sailor friend about delusions and dreams and went aboard. Gerry and George were back from Cape Town. Robbie was wide awake and Hector was brewing up a pot of tea.

“Where’s the dinghy?” I asked.

“Gone ashore somewhere on the Cape,” said Gerry. “And do you know we’ve had a nice midnight sail ?”

“What happened?”

“Well, the anchor dragged and I couldn’t start the engine so we had to sail back in. I took one long tack out to sea where it was rough as hell and the dinghy broke loose. I spent an hour tacking and jibing trying to pick her up and couldn’t do it before she drifted into shoal water, so we came back inside and anchored.”

“That explains,” I laughed.

“Explains what?” said Gerry.

I told him about the sailor ashore and then we exchanged experiences of the day and went to sleep.

The next night the break in the weather came, the wind shifted suddenly into the south-southeast and we got underway at once. It was a beautifully clear full moon night and we beat out of False Bay, and then with slack sheets rounded the Cape of Good Hope, close by, under the great rotating beam of the lighthouse. It was an impressive sight: the *Hurricane* under full sail with all the wind she wanted, climbing the moonlit mountainous seas that broke in ten fathoms of water. And when we steered north the last Cape had been rounded, Africa lay to the east and the Atlantic Ocean cradled the ship. We were seventeen days from Durban and Cape Town was only thirty-five miles up the coast, but morning brought a calm, then a light northwest wind rippled the water over the huge southerly sea; the mountain tops on the peninsula were shrouded in clouds but a fog closed in, hiding the land. I had Hector start the engine but it ran less than two hours and died. The feed pipes were clogged and not a drop of gasoline would come through to the carburettor. There was ample kerosene aboard and we managed to drain about a pint of gasoline from the feed pipes, which we used to feed the motor; and then from a tin of kerosene we fed the motor by hand,



a cupful at a time, through a funnel attached to the carburettor with a length of rubber hose. It was disagreeable work and we managed in shifts of a half-hour each, but it was the warmest job on the ship, for above the cold wet fog was thicker and steamers were sounding their fog horns too close for comfort. Visibility was limited from the crest of one sea to the next.

In the late afternoon the fog lifted and Table Mountain, under its stormy white cloth, was abeam. A light breeze came up, relieving us from the job of hand-feeding the engine and inhaling the fumes of kerosene. By dark we were anchored in the Victoria Basin off the Cape Yacht Club's landing with the sails furled, the riding light on the forestay and a borrowed dinghy trailing astern.

Ashore at the Cape Town Club, after a hot bath, an excellent dinner, and a brandy, I felt warm and secure for the first time in many days. The floor was strangely solid and level; weather having no real meaning was represented only in a window frame as a picture; the sea was forgotten in the distance and the long stretches of unprotected harbourless South Africa coast, the stormy rendezvous of three oceans, receded into mere geographical facts learnt in school. With responsibility gone, a rock was only a rock, and the sea only salt water, but the thunderous violence of their meeting never penetrated the walls of the Cape Town Club.

After a week of complete idleness ashore, we saw George and Robbie hilariously off on a Dutch boat, Durban bound. Then we returned aboard the *Hurricane* with an empty feeling that was accentuated by the deserted fore-stateroom.

## Chapter XXIX

**THE** South Atlantic heaving against the breakwater echoed dully across the harbour where a light fog, resting low on the water, evidenced the windless morning that mocked our haste to put to sea. Table Mountain stood up boldly back of Cape Town, smoking from the early sun burning away the mist. Swiftly we worked stowing stores below, for the chart was marked with a schedule, St. Helena by May twenty-fourth, but St. Helena was seventeen hundred miles and May was seven days gone. We had a passenger for the island of Napoleon's exile, George Mason, one of the survivors of the Royal Natal Yacht Club's anniversary dinner, who had flown from Durban to join our ship for the passage to St. Helena, where he could return on the Union Castle boat sailing on the twenty-fourth; and, as the next south-bound ship sailed a month later, George Mason was counting the days, hours, and minutes.

"Do you think you can make it in seventeen days?" he asked. "For I *must* catch that boat."

"It's a cinch," I replied with more confidence than I felt. "Once we enter the trades, we'll average a hundred and fifty miles a day." But the trades were a long way north.

When Gerry came out on deck and announced that everything was stowed for sea, a light breeze from the northwest, blowing away the fog, had brought rain and Table Mountain was lost in the haze.

"There's nothing like a dead head-wind for a starter," he said. "Or nothing as cheery as a nice cold rain," I said, struggling with sticky oilskins. "Let's go!"

Hector took the stops off the sails, Gerry and I cast off the bow and stern lines, and we moved away from the jetty, waving to our friends standing there in the rain. The *Hurricane* was homeward bound, seven thousand miles to the Gulf of Mexico, for St. Helena was only a near incident. Close-hauled on the starboard tack, we stood out to sea in a cold grey world. Albatrosses circled the patches of snaky brown kelp weed rising over the slopes of the long southern sea, seals with whiskered faces looked curiously at the ship, and the black heads of

penguins, like miniature seals, bobbed on the surface; but the South Atlantic with its dearth of islands is a lonely sea.

North and west we worked the ship through the variables until the skies cleared and the weather grew warmer with each smaller degree of latitude. Albatrosses were now scarce, there was little kelp weed, and the sea was the deep blue of the tropics. Then, the ninth day out of Cape Town, the sun, setting into a blank western horizon, coloured a close-packed mass of white-topped clouds in the south and east. It was dead calm and the sails inboard filled alternately on either side, jerking the sheet blocks noisily, while aloft the jaws of the gaffs creaked monotonously. After dark all hands hopefully watched those well-ordered ranks of trade wind clouds advance across the stars until a faint breeze, swelling the canvas, straightened the drooping sheets. Then suddenly the southeast trades came in fresh, lifting the booms, singing and whistling through the rigging; and the boiling wake, flecking a path of foam over the black undulations, raised George Mason from the depths of depression, for only yesterday, when drifting along in a two-knot westerly, he had pictured himself as Napoleon marooned on St. Helena.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth, we raised the island. George was audibly relieved and we were a happy crew having breakfast on deck to watch the land grow, when Hector, coming up with the pot of coffee, announced conversationally, “Capitan, on me watch I see won bawt, muy grande, she come close by on zee opposite course.”

“What!” said George, spilling half of his coffee in the cockpit.

“Are you sure, Hector, that it was a large boat?” I asked.

“Si, Capitan,” he said indignantly.

“Maybe it’s just a tramp,” I said to George.

“No, Capitan! yo vista! Zees bawt have plenty lights.”

“My god!” said George; “if that’s my boat . . .”

George, although fifty years old and weighing two hundred pounds, was the ablest hand we had ever had aboard; and Gerry and I both tried to persuade him to sail on to the West Indies, until the island, over two thousand feet above the

sea and close by, stopped the discussion, and George went forward, breathlessly waiting to round the point to see if by chance the Union Castle boat was in the roadstead. St. Helena, like all high islands isolated in the trades, was green on the highlands and the windward slopes, but arid and brown on the leeward side. Rounding the cliffs on the north end we worked south in the uncertain breeze off the land until we opened up James Bay, which was deserted except for a fleet of lighters and a diminutive old steamer flying the flag of Argentina.

“Well, there’s your home for the next month,” I pointed.

George swore at the Union Castle Line. “The damn boat,” he said, “is usually a day late, but when I want to get on it she sails a day early!”

Anchoring close to the Argentine boat, off Jamestown, which filled the narrow floor of a deep-walled valley, we went ashore in a hired boat, after receiving pratique, and helped George move into the hotel. There was no ice at the bar and the warm drinks tasted like bilge water but, nevertheless, brightened the landscape. Later we entered the ship at the customs, called on the Governor’s secretary, and then went aboard the Argentine where we were made very welcome by Captain Juan Carlos Mason of the *Sentinel II*, and life on St. Helena made a sudden upward turn, for the ship had a refrigerated cargo of frozen turkeys, ducks, chickens, beef, and pork, a chilled cargo of champagne from Argentina, and a local fresh cargo of live lobsters, called “stumps.” We toasted the *Sentinel II*, and the *Sentinel II* toasted the *Hurricane* until Captain Juan Carlos Mason of Buenos Aires swore common ancestry with our passenger George R. Mason, proprietor of the best beach hotel in Durban, South Africa. For five days we lived on the fat of the roadstead, celebrated Empire Day and Argentina Independence Day, and ate all we could hold, for there would be lean days of tinned beef and rice ahead. Ashore we met, I think, all of the thirty-odd white inhabitants, while Hector, on his usual three-day drunk, disported himself ashore, making admirable progress on the three thousand-odd coloured.

Jamestown is a mixture of many races. Before the opening of the Suez Canal and the advent of steam, sailing ships between Europe and the Indies called at St. Helena, which is situated on the trade routes, for fresh food and water. So the Portuguese, English, French, and Dutch mingled with the imported Chinese, Indians, Malays, and Africans, and only a few can trace their ancestry, and many of the children who romp in Jamestown’s single street, not knowing their own fathers, are often named after the ship that had called the right time

ago. It is one of the most promiscuous islands on earth and, in order to return aboard after dark, you must run a gauntlet of girls of many shades of brown. The most persistent was African "Midnight Molly," who could scarcely be passed without a physical encounter, for she would flatter, plead, and cajole, pull violently on an arm, and even offer to reduce her price from two shillings to one.

Sailing day was Sunday, May 29th, and we lunched aboard the *Sentinel II* where the *Hurricane* was warmly toasted with the champagne of Argentina and wished a phenomenal amount of good weather.

"Adios, amigos!" The tan-barked sails fluttered up the masts, filled with a gust of wind out of the valley, and the *Hurricane* wore around until the mizzen jibed and we chased after the white clouds that, rolling over St. Helena's mountain-tops, sailed gaily away into the north-west. There was not a drop of gasoline aboard and our dinghy was on the rocky shores of the Cape Peninsula, but ahead was the cleanest and fairest ocean in the world, the South Atlantic in the trades, unruffled by storms and unscarred with reefs. So, casually, we embarked for Barbados, which is nearly as far from St. Helena as Honolulu is from New York City.

Again there was the endless procession of days and nights, of eating, watching, and sleeping, while all the forces of nature joined to help the ship comfortably along her course. It was neither hot nor cold, with the southeast wind too moderate to raise a sea, but steady enough to drive us without effort over the regular undulations. The trades would freshen and tire a little, then freshen again, but every day the little crosses on the chart, reaching farther towards home, quickened the pulse of each man aboard. The last continent was far astern and the last ocean was slipping swiftly under the keel. After fourteen identical days at sea, the *Hurricane*, standing up straight with the dead wind aft, sailed proudly past the island of Fernando de Noronha, off the Brazilian coast, without yawing or luffing a sail, for she was hurrying home, and the thousand-foot spire on the island was merely a marker indicating that she had made seventeen hundred and fifty miles. Still standing straight, she crossed the Equator without ceremony and then, horrified at the vast amount of muddy, brackish water two hundred miles off the Amazon's mouth, she swung her booms inboard and rolled in the calm of the doldrums.

"This is no way to act," I said, "without a drop of fuel aboard"; so we quieted her down by hauling in the tangled sheets. Then three great sharks came up

under her stern. We fed one a piece of bacon rind on a hook and chain leader fast to our old log line; and the monster, swallowing bait, hook and chain, started for South America, burning the line out through three pairs of calloused hands until it was parted by a smoking turn around the boom gallows.

“My God,” said Gerry, “we didn’t even slow him down.”

However, the commotion startled the ship into life, for the advance guard of the northwest trades reached unexpectedly down into the doldrums and the *Hurricane*, determined to make up the lost time, leaned over and, with every sail drawing, reached two hundred and two miles in the next twenty-four hours.

On the morning of June 28th, we sighted Barbados from aloft; but in the afternoon, close by the land and only three miles from the anchorage, it fell calm and we rolled in the heat until a rain squall at sunset sent us flying into Carlisle Bay, where we dropped the hook too late to go ashore, after 3,800 nautical miles in thirty days. When the rain ceased, the water, like black velvet, was streaked with the lights of Bridgetown, the ship was strangely quiet, there was a damp earthy smell, distinct after the sterile sea, and the foreign sound of automobile horns ashore was vaguely disturbing after the harmony of the wind and water and the lonely cry of gulls.

## Chapter XXX

**HECTOR** was excited, for in a few hours he would set foot on Mexican soil. Busily he collected his belongings, polished the green fuzz from his shoes, and pulled the trousers of his one good “suite” over two pair of dirty shorts. In a large duffel bag he shoved, indiscriminately, sea shells, silk pajamas, an overcoat, a blanket, the twenty-two rifle I had given him as a parting present, several books, and handfuls of old clothing. Between assembling bits of gear, he scrambled aloft to look at the land, and when the tops of coconuts on Mujeres Island, the *Hurricane's* first foreign port, were visible from the deck, Hector was ready to go ashore.

It was hot and nearly calm. . . . From Georgetown, on Grand Cayman, where we stopped a day for fruit and eggs and sent the cable home: “Arriving Mobile about August first—Ray,” we had lived on calms and light airs; and from Kingston, Jamaica, to Grand Cayman, we had lived on calms interrupted by violent rain squalls from the northeast; but from old-world Barbados, where schooners from Nova Scotia with timber, sailing the one leg of the old triangle whose apex was once the slave coast of Africa, warp into the carenage, which Gerry said was like “a Winslow Homer painting,” to the blue mountains of Jamaica, we had run before a strong breeze, eleven hundred miles in only eight days. . . .

It was afternoon when we anchored between Mujeres Island and the low coast of Mexico in the same spot where the *Hurricane* had anchored over three years ago. The same boat with the huge red, white, and green flag of Mexico came alongside, and in it was our friend the Capitan de Puerto with his brown uniform coat buttoned up to his chin. His serious face relaxed in a smile of recognition as he stepped aboard. Below, with a round of Barbados rum, we inquired about a few of our old friends here and on Cozumel and learned that several had died from drinking too much *Habenero*. Then we turned to Hector, who was without papers or identification of any kind. However, it was not difficult to convince el Capitan that Hector was a Mexican citizen, so we officially signed him off by making out a set of “landing papers” on the typewriter, which were duly signed by all hands present.

On deck Hector threw his little pile of belongings into the port captain's boat and looked ashore at the sandy street from the jetty, lined with low pastel buildings, and at the thatched houses under the palms where *Los Indios* lived. When he came forward to give us a hand with the anchor for the last time, his exuberance collapsed. There were tears in his eyes. The ship had been his life so long that it had become a habit too strong to break without pain.

"Adios, Hector!" And with headsails backed, the ship wore around and, slowly gathering way, slipped out of Mujeres harbour at sunset.

With a whispering breeze just filling the sails, we sat in the cockpit and talked most of the night on what we would do when we landed. We were closer together and the ship was taller and the Gulf of Mexico was as vast as any sea.

For three days it was very hot, with light variable winds, but the barometer was steady and, although the sky was clean of hurricane signs, there was weather building up in the south and west. Thunderheads were massing for an attack which came in a procession of hard rain squalls that staggered the ship under full sail, driving her so deep in the water that the wake trailed off at the mizzen chain plates. Too short-handed to take in sail at the height of the squalls and too far behind schedule to shorten in advance, we would square off until the main and topsail blanketed the headsails; so the ship made up for those three fight days. Then on the last day of July the position was entered for the last time in the log book; it was the last page of a 1215-page book, for in the morning we would be in Mobile Bay. At midnight a heavy squall drove us north for an hour and, when the horizon cleared ahead, Sand Island light flashed against the sky. Just at daylight we were off the bar and the low pine-clad coast of Alabama marked the finish line.

A little white pilot boat, climbing over the muddy seas, headed toward the ship. We hauled the tattered and faded Stars and Stripes to the mizzen peak and the yellow quarantine flag to the crosstrees on the main, then I luffed up so the pilot could come alongside.

"Who are you an' where'r you from?" yelled a voice from the launch coming under our lee.

"*Hurricane*—eighty-five days out of Cape Town."

"What!!" came an incredulous voice.



“Cape Town, South Africa,” I repeated.

“Well, I will be damned,” said the pilot, and he jumped aboard.

Then another rain squall cracked down and, under full sail with a strong fair tide, we roared down the channel, and the pilot’s face expressed keen delight when he felt the ship tug on the helm with her passage-making pull. We passed close under the dead glass eye of the lighthouse where the pilot, Captain Cook, shouted to the keeper to report the *Hurricane*, which had made her last landfall, and then handed me this rain-soaked letter dated a week ago:

Capt. Ray Kauffman  
c/o Yacht Hurricane  
At Sea.

Dear Sir:

The Buccaneer Yacht Club wishes to extend to you and your party a cordial invitation to dock at their club upon your arrival in Mobile, Alabama.

All of the club facilities will be placed at your disposal and we can assure you a very pleasant visit.

There is a party of your friends who are our guests, awaiting your arrival.

Very truly yours,

J. G. MEYERS, *Commodore*.

After the brief formality of entering the ship, there was the wildest excitement and then the deep joy of seeing our families again. The Krebses, who had built the ship, were there in Sunday clothes, and Sidoine was the proudest man in America.

“I knowed it was the *Hurricane* as soon as I seen the backwards rig!” he said, and then added confidentially, “To tell the truth, I never thought you all would bring this boat back here. No suh! I never thought you all would make it out there in that little boat. That guff is a awful place.”

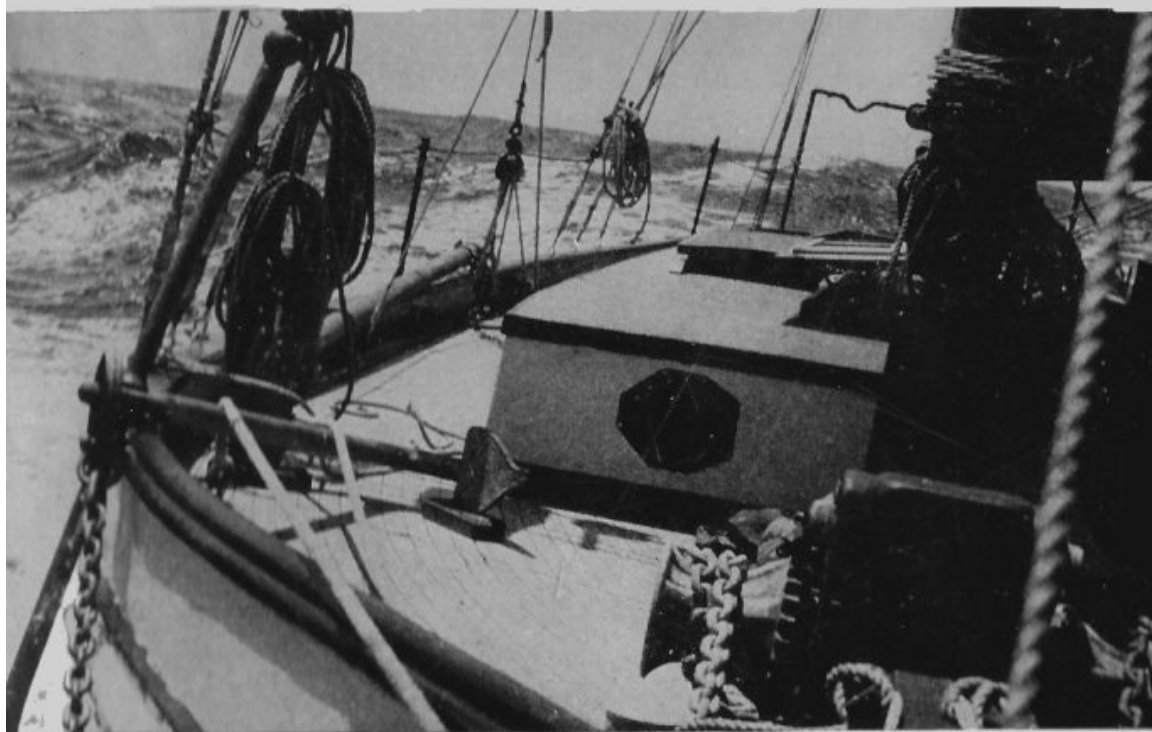
For the moment the homecoming entirely suppressed a vague undercurrent of sadness, for the guiding star had faded out when that last joyous cry of “Land Ho!” came from aloft, muffled by the wind; and I dreaded the next move into the regular pattern of life with its limited horizons.

I would miss the many little sounds the ship made underway, protesting the heavy weather, groaning in a calm or singing her way along in the fresh trades with the wake gurgling in contentment. I would miss the smell of the alcohol priming the stove and the smell of coffee floating out of the companionway when the eastern sky was strewn with the golden fleece of sunrise.

Under the huge moss-bearded live oak where the “la’nching” whisky had been kept cool in moist stone jugs I looked at the *Hurricane*, motionless on the bayou in the cradle of her birth. She was the same child of the cypress swamps and the saw grass, but she had changed, and many of her changes were an integral part of the ship; her decks were from the jungles of Siam, her keel was from the forests of Queensland, and her sails were hand-sewn by the Chinese in Singapore; little tears of rust had marked her sides under the chain plates. I wondered if her crew had changed beyond the deep teak tan which would fade in an Iowa winter like the decks of the ship in the sun. Would we retain the lessons we had learned? For the long night watch under the mystery of space had given us a quieter mind, the long hot calms had taught us patience, and from the close association in confined quarters we had learned a great tolerance. If we should forget, then three and a half years would have gone from our lives in utter futility.







*One of the dramatic illustrations  
from Ray Kauffman's exciting book*

# Hurricane's Wake